THE BRITISH SEAS

The Baiters. From a picture by Colin Hunter, A.R.A.

THE

BRITISH SEAS

PICTURESQUE NOTES

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AND OTHER WRITERS

With many Illustrations after

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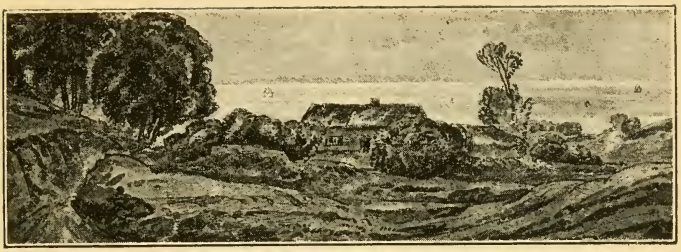


THE BRITISH SEAS

CHAPTER I

THE DOWNS.

Historic interest—North Foreland and Margate—Goodwin Sands—A Summer Scene—A Wreck on the Sands—Ramsgate lifeboat—Hardships suffered by lifeboat men—Wreck of the *Indian Chief*—Ramsgate Harbour—Ramsgate viewed at night.

THERE is not a tract of water the wide world over fuller of memories, more charged with historic maritime interests, than that little space of Channel sea which washes the fragment of Kentish seaboard, from the foot of the giant sentinel—the South Foreland—to the fast-dissolving relic of Sandown Castle at the north end of the quaint, salt, seething, blowing, and desperately cold old town of Deal. There is, indeed, no particular grandeur of scenery

hereabouts. The romance, the colour, the warmth, the delicate lights and shades of such havens as Plymouth—that Sydney Bay in little—of Falmouth, of Dartmouth, of some scores of spots round these coasts, are wanting. There is little or no shading of vegetation. The stare of the cliff is hard and bald with chalk; the line of land falls sharply from the foreland altitude to the flat and dismal wastes of Sandwich, with their one or two storks moping solitarily, and nursing their melancholy on one leg. There is a deal of mud in Sandwich Haven at ebb tide, with something of ghostliness in the vision of a little tug staggering on rickety paddle-wheels through the slime-defined channel of the River Stour. A church spire, peeping over distant trees at the extremity of the stretch of soil-like sand, hints at civilization amidst these wastes. It is Sandwich—quite a miniature Nineveh in its way; a fact as far as bricks and mortar go, yet as complete an abstraction, too, as though it had been buried five hundred years since.

As the land trends towards Ramsgate it grows from marshes and sand-plains into a chalk front, and by the time it has brought its shoulder to bear upon Pegwell Bay—famous for those shrimps which, by the way, are never caught there—it has raised itself to the dignity of a cliff, and so proceeds, till past the North Foreland and Margate, when it shelves again into the bleak and insignificant seaboard of Westgate. But though there is very little of beauty, and nothing whatever of majesty, along this line of

The Goodwin Sands on a Calm Day. By Barlow Moore.

coast, saving the imperial height of South Foreland, that certainly presents a kingly front as it raises its towering head and shining eye of lantern, like to some great giant keeping a bright look-out on that coast of France yonder, and sentinelling these kingdoms in their south-eastern parts;—yet a sort of rude picturesqueness, qualities of a briny and tarry quaintness there are in abundance, beyond anything of a like sort that I am acquainted with in other parts of the country: thanks largely to Deal, which is so pre-eminently a surf-created town that the beholder, having once surveyed it, must not expect ever to see anything like it again. But it is not only Deal; right abreast, facing the line of shingle that blackens and flashes under the creaming arch of the breaker, is the long yellow shoal of the Goodwin Sands. Here is a detail of prodigious significance in the interests of this tract of waters. A beauty it has, but of a very deadly sort. On a calm day the gold-coloured line of it stretches along the horizon somewhat sinuously, as though it were some sleeping, floating serpent, measuring a league or so from its venomous fang to its poisonous tail. The smooth summer ripple purrs upon its sleek coat, and a soft sound, like the seething of champagne, floats it off into the warm silence of the day or night. The red lightships, resembling a little company of soldiers, guard it. They rear their masts like muskets, and deliver their cries of "Halt!" in the language of small ordnance or of sparkling lanterns. It is a spot where the con-

templative thinker would love to sit and muse; but he must take care to look very earnestly at the barometer before he embarks for the shoal; he must observe the tides also, and should he be alone, then, after he lands, he will be wise to keep a taut hold of his boat's painter whilst he sits down and thinks.

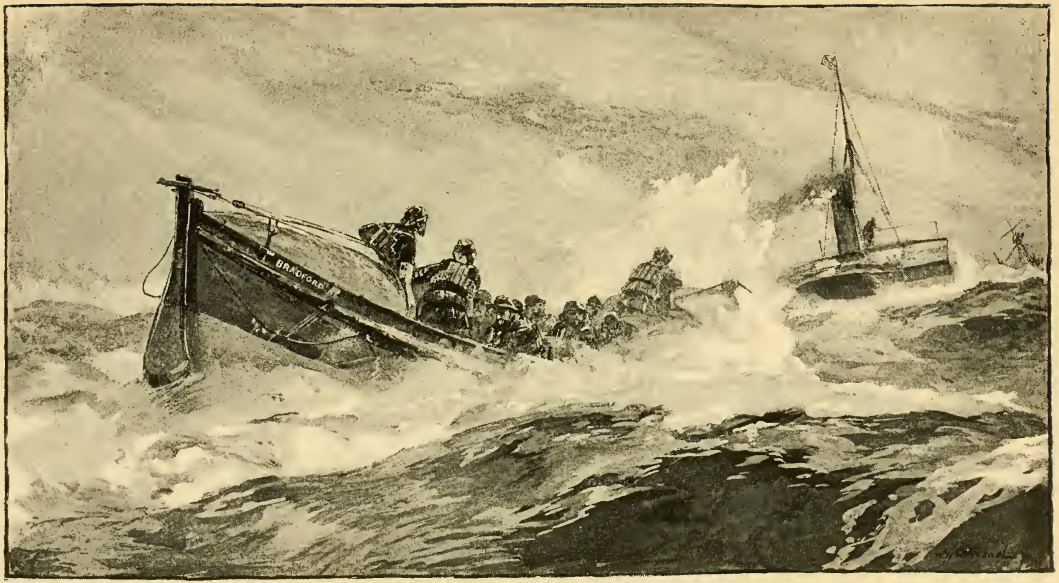
I was once ashore on the Goodwins on a calm, moonlight night; not alone—no! but my boatman was a man of few words; he was a trustworthy person, and there was no grog in the boat, and it was without anxiety that I strolled a little way inland and sat me down on a black rib of a dead wreck, and pondered and moralized whilst I took a survey of my situation, and considered the spectral beauties which shone out ice-clear, yet of a silvery mistiness too, round about me and in the clear dusk of the north and west. The moon rode high in the south, a small ball of greenish splendour, with a fan-shaped wake of molten silver trembling under her; and there was nothing to tarnish her disc saving now and again a thin ring of gossamer scud floating slowly athwart, like a little burst of steam, and gathering tints of mother-of-pearl as it blew stealthily, with airy sheen, off the rim of the orb. The silence—how is it to be expressed? It was the deeper for the delicate, innumerable voice of rippling waters. The white foreland cliffs showed wan in the spangled obscurity of the distance—mere clouds or heaps of faintness, as though they were self-luminous, with a look of ice in places. The haze of the

lamps of Deal hung low upon the water in a dim, golden hovering ; and the lights of Ramsgate showed like a showering of fire-flies. A mile or so away was the Gull lightship, with her one lantern slowly revolving and striking a spark of fire into the moonlit atmosphere, in the likeness of a radiant spoke of a wheel, as it turned with pendulum regularity. The stars never looked higher, I thought, than they did on that night ; but I was low-seated, and the plain of the Channel sea stretched flat on either hand of me, tremorless as ebony, with a flake of light in the north-eastern heart of it dropped by some large star that shone like a rose low in the velvet depths.

Here one might dream until the cold black line of the crawling tide warned one to be off. Even a sluggish imagination may successfully transform a fairy scene of moonlit sea into the magnificence and horror of the thunder of the hurricane and the raging of foam crimsoned by the lightning dart, when inspired by such a bone of wreck as that which I sat upon. A short line of like ribs marked all that remained of the amidship section of a vessel of considerable burthen. She had stranded on the Goodwins some three or four weeks before in such another warm night as this ; but it was dark and thick, with a near horizon, and there was a mere oozing of moon, shapeless as a jelly-fish, up in the smother that the orb faintly whitened. The vessel had touched and hung with all sail set—courses and topsails rising into royals—as bland and elegant a

fabric in her way as any that ever floated through the Gulls. They burnt a flare on board her, a ruby light that made a blood-red picture of the motionless craft; whilst the instant her situation had been noticed, up swept a rocket from yonder Gull light-ship, a ball of flame that might have been caught by the hand that discharged it, so motionless was the atmosphere and so plumb the descent of the meteor-signal. A minute later an air of wind came in a low moan along the sands. It freshened, and yet freshened, and in half an hour's time the moon had disappeared, the night was black with flying scud, and the Goodwins were just a roar and tremble of surf, the spray leaping high in fierce collision and sweeping between the masts and through the rigging of the doomed ship with the weight and sting of leaden shot. One by one the masts went over the side like clay pipe-stems snapped off between the fingers. All was horror and confusion. She was a foreign barque, with a forecastle full of Dagos and such people, and they had clung to the ship until it was too late to leave her, for one reason and another—uppermost, no doubt, being the desire of preserving their property—until, indeed, their boats were wrecked by the falling spars, and the sea was sweeping their decks in cloud-like flashings of foam.

It was between two and three hours before the lifeboat from Ramsgate came alongside. That boat is nearly always towed out, and something had gone wrong with the tug. By the time she had let go of the steamer and was hanging on by the barque's



The Ramsgate Lifeboat. By W. H. Overend.

quarter, with my friend Fish, her coxswain, roaring out instructions in the bold, brave tongue of the Ramsgate 'longshoreman to the shrieking, gesticulating huddle of foreigners who were sheltering themselves abaft some deck structure, the vessel had been utterly wrecked aloft; she was already a sheer hulk hard and fast; with a wild and ruined heap of spar and canvas rising and falling alongside of her, and dealing her volcanic shocks with every plunging wash of the coil of black seas bursting into giddy whiteness over her. There were dead men on her deck: wretches who had been slain by the fall of the masts, or who, lying stunned, had been strangled out of hand by the water betwixt the rails. This was the sort of scene to dream of and recreate on a warm, stirless, moonlit summer night, seated as I was upon a memorial of that bad loss of a ship. To think of her floating to her doom with the airy spires of her canvas pallid in the dusk as though feebly star-touched—all silent aboard her—a trembling green light like a glow-worm on her starboard rail—a little haze round about the cabin skylight window faintly defining the figure of the captain or mate, who sees nothing and heeds nothing! Did they fire a gun aboard the Gull lightship as a hint? Perhaps in the thickness of that night the lightsmen could not make sure of her; but the true significance of these sounds comes out in the contrast between the aspect of that barque at the moment of her touching, with a shudder running through every timber, and passing like a shiver up the wan heights of cloths—and the

short length of grinning fangs, upon one of which I sat musing on that quiet night.

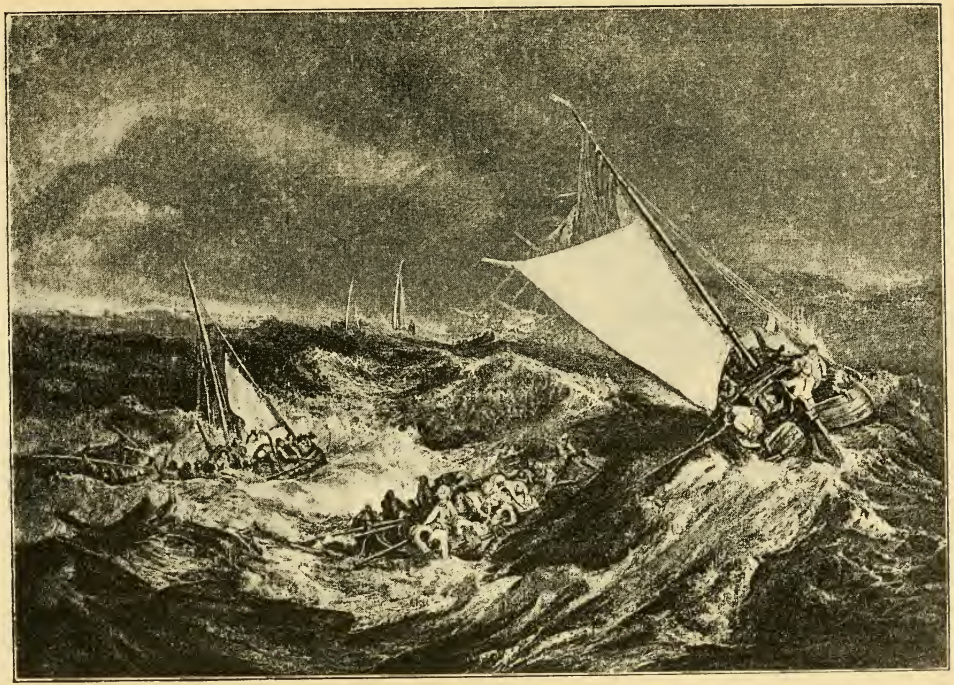
There is good work done by the lifeboat all round the coast, but no better work than in these waters. Ramsgate tops the list of life-savers hereabouts; but then there is always a tug at hand to tow the boat out, and this renders her as indifferent to the quarter whence the wind blows as if she were a steamer herself. There are good boats at Broadstairs and at Deal and at Walmer; but when the wind blows a heavy, dead inshore gale, what are the people belonging to them to do? they can only look idly on whilst the Ramsgate steamer, with the boat belonging to that harbour in tow, heads into the storm with a helm steady for what is to be succoured. The lifeboat is at the best but an unwieldy fabric. She is meant to be unsinkable, and the machinery that achieves this quality for her renders her, it must be confessed, an unsightly structure. Her masts are low, her canvas inadequate, and on a wind she will blow away to leeward like a bladder. I have sometimes watched a match amongst lifeboats in a regatta, and admired the cleverness with which they drove with a straight wake when the wind was over their stern; but a new face, I observed, was always placed upon their trick of sailing when, after putting their helm down to no purpose, they wore to come round again for their starting point.

If there were no tug at Ramsgate there might be a general endeavour amongst the other boats stationed along this coast to head out for a wreck; let the wind

blow as it might. But much more often than not it is an inshore wind, and the Ramsgate boat therefore has it all her own way. But it is a noble service, no matter what port the boat hails from. I have seen a deal of it in my time, have witnessed many rescues, one or two of which I have attempted to chronicle, and never recall what I have beheld without an emotion of enthusiasm that quickens the beat of my pulse. The honour, I may say the glory, of this work, is entirely the 'longshoreman's. It is the waterman who mans the boat and who imperils his life. There is nothing that galvanizes his figure so effectually as the lifeboat summons. A bell rings and instantly all is hurry. The beach—the pier—is filled with figures sprawling forwards in red-hot haste. If the men are in bed when the call is made they do not wait to dress, but snatch at the clothes which are next them and fight their way into the garments as they run. To appreciate all the meaning that enters into the expression "man the lifeboat," one should survey the scene of boiling Channel waters on some December or January midnight. The wind is pouring in thunder over the land, and all along from the base of the white cliffs rises an echo as of a ceaseless explosion of great guns. The black air is blind with flying sleet and rain; but seaward there will be a coming and going of hoariness, a sort of feeble blinking of a dim and ghastly lustre that is not to be called light, made by sudden great upheavals of spray whipped and sent boiling in seething masses through the wind. In the town the streets are

empty; the few windy gaslights make a violent play of shadows; casements are shaking, trees are roaring, every chimney seems to hold its wounded giant groaning horribly; the edge of the blast as it howls round the corner has the sharpness of the scythe and smites like steel. Hark! through the uproar of the gale a faint *thud*—a distant gun—strikes upon the ear. From the pier-head, buried in foam and the shadow of night, soars a rocket that sparkles bravely out as it sweeps with lightning-like velocity into the north-east. Another glance of light upon the flying obscurity seawards—a second gun!—and presently you can distinguish a tiny point of brightness, burning and waning, upon the verge of the vast midnight stretch of throbbing obscurity. It is a flare—the night signal of the shipwrecked. A ship is ashore: there are human lives to be saved; the bell is furiously tolling, and out from their little houses, scrambling into their jackets as they race, the brave hearts are running to man the lifeboat.

I believe if I were a lifeboatman I would rather sail through such a night as this I am endeavouring to describe than be towed through it. There will be some sort of ease in the posture of a buoyant fabric under canvas, let the sea be what it will. Though she be close-hauled the surge is still on her bow, and her long floating launches are not utterly intolerable. But to be dragged head on to it is miserable work indeed. The water flies in sheets in a very liquid canopy over the boat; the men sit knee-deep in it, and will come very near



The Shipwreck. By J. M. W. Turner.

to being frozen dead some while before they heave the ship they have to succour into view. She tows by too long a scope of rope to suffer her to obtain any sort of shelter from the tug ahead. Nor inconsiderable are the sufferings of the steamboat's men in this sort of midnight excursion in the heart of a winter gale. The vessel is smothered from the "eyes" to the funnel casing, and the skipper on the bridge peers in vain to discover what has become of the forepart of his little ship. Her paddle-boxes are alternately buried, and at every roll one wheel or the other lifts sheer out of water, and may be seen revolving against the foam like the sails of a windmill. Nevertheless, there is a cabin aboard; or on deck there is always a place that has a lee side, where a man may crouch and keep himself tolerably dry, and be able even to smoke a pipe. But there is nothing with a lee side belonging to it in the lifeboat. There is no cabin. The men may indeed find room to lie in a huddle, one on top of another in the bottom of the boat, in an inextricable confusion of sou'-westers, cork-jackets, and sea-boots; but what sort of a mattress are they to find in planks which are above their knees with water, and what sort of warmth are they to obtain from such shelter as the thwarts of a lifeboat supply? In wild, fierce, wintry weather, lifeboating is desperate work indeed; a species of seafaring that is without parallel in any other walk of the vocation. What is the temptation? It was half-a-sovereign a day, each man, and a pound for

night work; and the pay was the same be the weather what it would. It will be admitted that there is nothing very potent in such rewards to coax men into hazarding their lives and into accepting the harshest extremities of suffering. I will not, indeed, say that this sovereign and this half-sovereign do not provide a small animation in themselves; but no man who has witnessed the work can doubt that the true seminal spirit of it lies in a noble humanity, in intrepid resolution to save, without thought of what is to follow, whether it be applause, or emolument, or death.

The risks are frightful. To be sure, the boats are self-righting, but the men in them are not; and when a whole crew are rolled out overboard it is by no means inevitable that they shall all roll in again. Every man is equipped in a cork-jacket, which certainly provides him with a chance; but if he float away in the blackness and is no more heard of, his death is rendered distressing beyond expression by the protraction of his sufferings. He may be hours afloat without dying, enduring all the anguish of the cold, the slowly-killing drenchings of flying spray, and then perish when help is at hand. Another condition of the service, too, is the memories it breeds. Amidst such a rude population as our 'longshoremen form, one might hardly hope to find so tender a sentiment as that of sympathetic recollection. Yet, in my own experience, I am able to say that for weeks and months men, formed apparently of the roughest and homeliest fibre,

with seemingly no more romance in their composition than there is gravy in a cube of shipboard salt beef, have suffered horrors by day, have been unable to close their eyes by night, through memory of some dreadful sea tragedy they have had to bear a part in.

I can recall one instance of this, and it much impressed me at the time. A ship named the *Indian Chief* went ashore on the Long Sand, to the northwards of the Goodwins. It was such weather as never could I recall the like of—a hurricane out of the north-east; all betwixt ocean and sky boiling with snow, and such a sea as brought the heart into my throat, viewing it, as I did, from over the edge of the North Foreland. The boat and the tug were two nights away; the magnificent spirit of the men defied the weather, and they continued to hunt for the ship, resolved not to shift their helm for home until they had boarded the wreck and saved the people, if any man remained to be saved. They sighted her at daybreak on the second day, a mere filament of mast in the heart of a very hell of warring white waters. The lifeboat slipped and bore down, and found the ship there breaking up, with her foremast standing and a knot of seamen in the foretop; her mizzenmast lay over the starboard quarter, and to it were lashed a number of dead men—men who had heen alive when the spar fell, and who had drowned in full sight of their shipmates above. The boat rescued the living, and was about to let go when her coxswain sung

out, "Pick up that poor fellow first!" He pointed to a figure of a man who was leaning on his breast over the spar. His gaze was fixed upon the boat; his lips seemed busy with ineffectual articulation; the heave of the sea swayed him into postures and motions of entreaty. But he was dead, and had been dead for hours. One of the lifeboat's men was haunted by this dreadful mocking image of life for days afterwards. He told me that he could not sleep; that when he lay down in the dark the figure was at the foot of his bed, from which it would force him to spring, covered with perspiration and in the utmost anguish of mind, to find relief by taking a turn outside.

Ramsgate, we may suppose, is the most popular of the seaside towns which lie within the embrace of the two famous points of Foreland. This will not be deemed very high praise perhaps when it is considered that in addition to Ramsgate there are but Broadstairs and Deal—Walmer being a mere extension of the latter town. Ramsgate is greatly beloved by the cockney—not more so perhaps than Margate; between them, indeed, they fairly divide the heart of 'Arry. That Margate should be very highly favoured by the lower classes of the metropolis is not hard to understand; whatever is alluring to the East-end imagination and tastes are, at Margate, accentuated with all the judgment and skill of persons who know their business as entertainers. But Ramsgate is without a Hall-by-the-Sea; it is without a Menagerie. Its sands in

Ramsgate. By Barlow Moore.

the height of summer do, indeed, support a few nigger melodists, a Punch-and-Judy show, and one or two other diversions of the kind. But the local police keep a very strict eye upon the respectability of the place; and certainly no baits of any sort are offered to the cockney to tempt him to take lodgings in Ramsgate. Yet to Ramsgate he comes in a very great multitude; he is to be seen overrunning the place in suits of clothes of indescribable hues and pattern; he gallops madly along on the back of the donkey; he crowds the pleasure sailing-boat to suffocation, and loads her down to a strake upon which no Board of Trade official would sanction the painting of Mr. Plimsoll's disc. Happily he is powerless to deform the picturesqueness of the town. A pretty place it is, viewed from the sea; I know of none prettier; the milk-white cliffs contrast pleasantly with the green and slate, the red and cream of the houses which line the summits. The Granville Hotel is a bold and imposing seamark, and rounds off the town at its eastern extremity with a handsome heap of glowing colour, of sparkling window, of waving banner, and castellated wing. It is a pity that the fine harbour should be very nearly dead and gone. Certainly, if it is not quite gone, it is fast going. The excavator seems to me to toil only for the smacksman and the waterman; for if not for theirs, then I know not for whose keels the slime and ooze are lifted and despatched to sea with soul-subduing monotony of regularity.

Time was when the west gully and the length of

the east pier were crowded with vessels of burthen—as burthen then went—two, three, and even four deep. Those were high old times for the local shipping agents; the era of cable-slipping and divers other sorts of nautical caper-cutting; when a wink was as good as a nod, and when the worthy folks of Lloyds were satisfied to pay, with a humble thanksgiving that the bill was not twice as long. Very few vessels enter Ramsgate Harbour now. The explanation is that it has been ruined by steam; but this reason is not quite satisfactory. Whoever has any acquaintance with the Downs must be fully aware that there is still a great number of sailing craft afloat, to all of which Ramsgate ought to be useful in a time of difficulty. Yet it seems to me that a ship must be in dire distress indeed before she will make for Ramsgate Harbour. Have not the excessive charges something to do with this? The cost of maintenance is probably considerable; but surely the dues are out of all proportion to the accommodation offered by piers without metals, without steam, with appliances of so crude and primitive a species that it is impossible to view them without laughter.

Yet as a picture the harbour gains by the policy that has long stultified and is now destroying it. It is hard to imagine a more animated and engaging scene than the space of water betwixt the piers offers on some breezy autumn morning when a fleet of smacks are getting under way for the North Sea fishing-grounds. Some are towed out three and four abreast, with the white water flashing between them,

the livelies aboard them sprawling about in their enormous boots, the red canvas thundering. As they clear the entrance the tide catches them, and away they go in fine style, scattering as the tow-ropes are let slip, and plunging like galloping cart-horses as they take the first of the seas and wash away to the northward. Others again, to save towage-charge, "ratch," out as it is called, and a spirited sight it is to witness. The seamanship of the fellows is excellent; they appear to know their little ships as a man the horse he has ridden for years; you see a smack under a heavy press leaning down to it till her waterways are under and heading direct for the granite of the pier; her bowsprit seems to be in the act of spearing the solid wall, when down goes her helm, round she spins like some waltzing girl nimble of foot; in a breath or two all is flattened in fore and aft, and she is smoking through it on the other tack. But there are other details of interest besides the fishing craft; notably the French three-masted lugger, with her enormous rotundity of bow and thickness of scantling. She goes full of men, often with several women aboard, and the rude hubbub of the marine *patois* of Gravelines, of Calais, and of Boulogne, furnishes an odd contrast of noise to the calls, shouts, and talk of the booted representatives of the fishing populations of Penzance, Shoreham, Lowestoft, and Plymouth, whose smacks congregate about those of the artless Wooden-Shoes on the west side of the harbour. There is always a crazy old tug panting to and fro, obnoxious to the

eye and full of business, dragging barges loaded with mud or towing out some unspeakable figure of a brigantine, which came in the other day filled with coal that depressed her to her covering boards, and now swims out gaunt with tall and worm-eaten sides, which are scarcely to be made to stand upright by the few tons of chalk which have been pitched into her for ballast.

Ramsgate, however, never looks so well as by night—a calm summer night, when the lingering rustic hectic in the west throws into a black mass the Catholic Church and buildings at the extremity of the town, and when the lights of the foreshore are springing up, striking tremulous lines of gold into the placid surface of the inner harbour or upon the oil-like breast of water that steeps to the sea-wall where the railway pierces the chalk terraces. There is real beauty in the picture at such a time. Ramsgate is prodigal in lamps, and when all is in full blaze she becomes a very Milky Way of radiance. She pencils her extent with fire; and, viewing the coast from the sea, you might, of a summer night, imagine that every evening brings around its obligation of festival or of celebration to the place. There are lights low down under the cliff along what is called the Marina; there are lights along the length of the narrow iron pier that forks out from the foot of the cliff that is crowned by the Granville Hotel; there are lights down upon the sands where the railway and its station are; and lights sparkle at the pier ends in divers colours. Against all this brilliance

the motionless sails of a craft lying in the harbour waiting for a slant of air will show in spaces of liquid gloom, and impart a singular beauty of shadow to the faintness of white cliff past them, and its spangled heights, and its glittering base.

By day, however, the seaward view of Ramsgate is much deformed by the railway. I can remember the time when the sands went in billows of gold to the foot of the huge spurs of chalk, and when the eye could sweep a magnificent expanse and length of foreshore, starting from the pier-wall and stretching on over many a hundred fathom, till it rounded in a noble platform out of sight, past some tall shoulder of cliff drawing on to Broadstairs. Now, instead of the cry of the seagull, it is the hideous whistle of the locomotive. The secret memories of the staring, milk-white, fortress-like front have been transformed into the impertinence of glaring advertisements. All is smoke and rattle, the screech of the engine, the distracting jar of shunting. It is a convenience that has ruined the sands. It is, of course, a convenience to be able to run up to London in two hours; but all the same the sands are not as they were; they are full of holes and gullies, and bathing grows more dangerous every year.

CHAPTER II

THE DOWNS (*continued*).

The 'longshoreman—Historic associations—Shipping in the Downs—The galley-punt—Deal boatmen—Smuggling—Broadstairs and Charles Dickens—Sandwich.

COMPARED with Deal, Ramsgate, in respect of its maritime interest, makes but a poor figure. It has, however, I believe, a licensed pilot, who is sometimes fortunate enough to fall in with a job. At long intervals there will blow into the offing some little barque, some little foreign brig with the clews of her topsails out of hail of the yardarms and a jack at the fore, and she is the licensed pilot's opportunity. He springs into a wherry and away he goes; but there is also a licensed pilot at Broadstairs—he, too, accepts the jack at the fore as *his* opportunity, and will start also, and then there is a race. It is a contest, however, that excites but little interest. It is universally felt along the coast that this licensing of pilots is an injustice to the 'longshoreman. There are men belonging to Deal, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs, to the full as capable of navigating a ship in these waters as any Trinity House man; but they are forbidden to do so, and are punished, along

with the master of the ship who employs them, if they are caught. But hunger renders them defiant, and as the smallness of their charges, in comparison with those of the licensed pilots, is an encouragement to shipmasters to darkly and covertly employ them, they still manage to earn here and there a few pounds. How, nevertheless, the 'longshoreman contrives to live is a problem I have never yet been able to resolve. The summer season is perilously short and the winter inordinately long. The wherry is hauled ashore before the autumn has fairly set in, and there is nothing more to be done with her till June comes round again. The chances supplied by hovelling are slender and scarce worth naming. A man may not pilot without a license—how, then, does the 'longshoreman live? It is surmised that his wife takes in washing; but when it happens that the 'longshoremen make a numerous population, it is impossible to suppose that all the women of his order are laundresses. He sells fish; he will paint a house; he will work aboard a collier; failing everything he will lean against a post, in which art he may certainly be said to excel. Built up in fearnought trousers of ponderous quality, stiff and taut in boots and in many thicknesses of jersey, watertight about the head, and possessed of pockets in which he is able to bury his arms to above the elbows, the 'longshoreman of the Downs' district is the most incomparable of loungers. Still, poor as he is, he usually seems to bear about with him the value of a pipe of tobacco and a pot of ale. One

cannot but think kindly of him. He is often the central memory of the seaside holiday; he carries us out a-fishing; and he encourages us to continue the sport long after the misgiving that there is no fish in the sea has become a conviction. His cry of "Boat, sir?—beautiful day for a row, mum!" vibrates upon the ear, and remains a cheerful recollection, even in the heart of a November London fog.

Time was when there was plenty of good fishing to be had off Ramsgate; but the pleasure trawlers have confirmed the injurious labours of the "toshers," and the ground has been so overdragged that its yield is now utterly insignificant. Further south there is better sport, and off Deal there is often excellent fishing. The finest whitings I have ever seen have been caught abreast of Walmer; shoals of herrings and mackerel come in close to the shingle in their respective seasons, and cod, codling, pouting, dabs, and plaice are abundant; but the sole is a rare fish, though large ones are occasionally hooked. Whether, however, one gets a bite or not, whether one catches anything or not, there is a dreamy pleasure in overhanging the gunwale of a boat on a quiet, slumberous, warm afternoon, that to many ranks highest amongst the enjoyments of the holiday outing. Life is at a distance; sounds by remoteness are sweetened into music; the cry of the hawker, the pealing of a bell, the stir of vehicles, combine into a note of softness which steals soothingly upon the ear, across the smooth

and gleaming surface of the intervening water. The fishing-line over the side inspires expectation enough to keep one awake, but it is a drowsy wakefulness that has in it the rest of slumber, leaving the faculties still sensible of the peace, the beauty, the coolness round about, the soft respiration of the swell, the vision of strange objects gliding past the boat through the glass-clear green profound, the inexpressible sweetness of old ocean's breath. Yet one's romantic moods are not left long undisturbed. The boatman, like the poor, is always with you, and his volubility is commonly proportioned to the quality of the sport. The less you catch the more he has to say. He converses with an eye to extending the time, and his language, if not always engaging, is at least diverting with the prosaics of the 'longshore vocation. I knew a worthy man named John Goldsmith, a Ramsgate boatman, and perhaps the most talkative man on the English coast. He had taken Charles Dickens out fishing with him; Wilkie Collins had also used his boat; and amongst others he would tell of were Benjamin Webster, General Tom Thumb, and Commodore Nutt. The General, he would say, lighted a cigar nearly as big as himself, and sat sucking at it very steadily, occasionally standing up to look over the gunwale, which he was too short to overhang. But in a little while the ground-swell or the cigar, or perhaps both, proved too much for him! he was oppressed with nausea, and was glad to get ashore. John Goldsmith would boast that Charles Dickens drew a

highly correct portrait of him, and printed it in "Household Words" or "All the Year Round." He had a vivid recollection of Benjamin Webster. He rowed that excellent actor out to a red buoy, where in those days there was some good fish to be caught. Webster looked a little pale and ill, but sat nevertheless manfully feeling for fish with his line. "Tell 'ee then what happened,' Goldsmith would say, "I got a boite and hooked a plaice size o' moy arm. He was a stiff 'un to draw up, and I had to put some strength into the job, and in swinging him inboards the flat of him struck the gent right across the cheek and knocked his wig overboard. He hadn't been reg'lar sick afore, but I allow that the smack of that there cold, moist sarface of fish about did his business. He took no notice of his wig, but just lay over the side, helpless as a young lady in a gale of wind." John Goldsmith found his yarns acceptable to his customers, and was never at a loss. Probably, had he lived, we should have heard of the Archbishop of Canterbury going out a-fishing with him; and, indeed, one might have thought him modest had he stopped at his Grace.

The Downs—the famous space of water where black-eyed Susan came aboard—lie over your ship's bow as she rounds the North Foreland, coming out of the North Sea, or from the River Thames. The Goodwin Sands are on your port bow, the range of white cliff on your starboard; and right ahead is a space of water which, were it land, would be more

consecrated by memory than any equal area of soil, point to what country you may. Let any man run through the earlier annals of these kingdoms: the sea fights were nearly all here; hereabouts the armies, glittering with helmet and breastplate, with spear and pennon, were embarking or arriving; here the vast convoys were preparing to weigh; here were adventured most of the attacks of the foreign foe against the country; up yonder bight, called Pegwell Bay, floated Saint Augustine to as high as Ebb's Fleet; a little further along Julius Cæsar is supposed to have landed. Enough yet remains of old Sandown Castle to bring Colonel Hutchinson to the memory and to fire the imagination with thoughts of deeds done here whilst it was yet such another fortress as the grim-looking castle of Deal, and the one beyond it at Walmer, where Nelson left a card upon Billy Pitt on finding him in bed, and where the old Iron Duke fetched his last breath. The history of these waters is a panorama of splendour, a gorgeous arras into which is woven very much indeed of what has gone to the making of Britannia. Just past the Goodwin Sands yonder, the ships of the great Armada were chased by those lions of the deep, Frobisher, and Fenton, and Drake, and the others of them. Abreast of that cold height of South Foreland Blake curled his whiskers and let fly a shotted and sulphureous intimation to Tromp to lower his flag; in other words, to pull off his hat to Britannia's sea-sovereignty. But a few cables' lengths further on that brave and honest old

Admiral, Sir William Monson, requested a like obeisance from the haughty Don, and with one ship to oppose a squadron would have sunk the Spaniards or foundered himself sooner than be denied. Let us but consider the flags which this small surface of narrow sea has reflected: Shovel, and bold Benbow; Ayscue, and noble-spirited Rooke; Vernon, and Hood, and Hawke; and last, but always first, the glorious bunting of Nelson himself, floating for weeks in defiance from the masthead of the frigate from whose quarter-deck the Hero of the Nile was keeping a bright look-out for the flotilla and the troops of the warrior Boney, as the sailors called him.

There is, indeed, plenty to think about and plenty to look at as you come sailing or steaming into these Downs. Sometimes, but very seldom, the water is a bare waste; then there must be a soldier's wind blowing, good for the inward as well as for the outward bounders. But for the most part the congregation is lively, and frequently thick. Every species of craft brings up in the Downs, saving, of course, the great ocean palaces. To the land-going eye there would seem but little variety in the rigs; but the nautical gaze may, with a little patience, witness almost every fabric that hails from north of the Mediterranean. One is occasionally astonished, too, by manifestations of survivals, of a sort to make a sailor stare as though he beheld a marine spectre. It was but the other day that I saw a frigate all of the olden time—such a frigate as Blackwood's *Euryalus;* such

a frigate as the *Theseus* or the *Shannon*—sailing through the Gulls. I searched in vain for a hint of a funnel. She was of timber; her gunports were closed, her bowsprit had the steeve of an old East Indiaman's; she carried a standing jib, her topsails were single with four reefs to the main, and her royal yards came close under the trucks; her slight heel to port disclosed a line of yellow metal, and, though but of one tier of guns, she stood upon the water like a cask. It was like going back fifty, nay, eighty years to see her. A deep-laden screw, a veritable ocean-tramp, passed her; and, somehow, such was the reality of the *ship*, such was the fitness of the tall, spacious-winged frigate to the scene I surveyed, that it was the steamboat which seemed to me to be the anachronism! The war-vessel flew a small Swedish colour and floated stately and bravely out of sight, watched by me (who would rather have seen her than the grandest armoured battleship that now swims) till her spanker fluttered out of sight past the round of the Foreland.

It is commonly the south-westerly wind that fills the Downs. Ships come struggling to abreast of Deal and Walmer, and then bring up to await a slant that will enable them to get round the South Foreland into the Channel. The detention is often cruelly protracted. I have known ships to lie six weeks in the Downs. The shift of wind they require never seems to happen. Day after day the dog-vane points as though some demon had crawled aloft and fixed it with a nail. It has often amused me on

such occasions to bring a powerful telescope to bear upon the people on board and observe their countenances. The constant glancings round the sea—the sour stare aloft—the darkening of purple-nosed visages to the forecastle-fancies which the dead-on-end wind excites—the impatient walk—the frequent flourish of a large fist in the direction from which the breeze blows; all this is irresistible when one's acquaintance with the seafaring character enables one to understand the moods and the language which these pacings, these grimacings, and cortortions of posture illustrate. But six weeks in the Downs! Figure lying off the cold and windy town of Deal in some small lump of a brigantine, whose masts are for ever swaying like a *batón* in the hand of a band conductor! Nothing to look at but a foreshore of shingle and luggers and little houses, most of them small shanties of tarred timber; and nothing to think of but when the wind is going to change: listening all day long to the weary groaning of the bones of the tossed and harassed carcase one is aboard of; and of a night incessantly rolling out of one's bunk whenever the ship, swinging to her anchor, comes athwart the rim of the sea! It is generally understood that sailors are not choice in their language; but, then, what vocation is more exasperating than that of the mariner's? When I think of six weeks' detention in the Downs, and add to that reflection the several considerations of the salted horse, of unspeakable pork, of biscuit honeycombed with worms, of wet, cold, and kicks, of poor

Shipping in the Downs. By Barlow Moore

pay and Dutch seamen, I cannot feel greatly astonished that the nautical mind should at long intervals utter itself in a few gentle sea blessings.

But from the shore the ships at anchor make a fine show. We are not sailors; we are not aboard; and, therefore, are not sufferers. We may be permitted then to view the scene with delight as a picture, without distressing ourselves in pitying the unfortunate Jacks who have to lie out there waiting for a shift of wind. It was but the other day that I was looking at a collection of upwards of two hundred sail of ships at anchor. They had all come together as if by magic. When I had gone to bed the night before there was but a single craft straining abreast of Deal town. The wind had been a light southerly air; the water had stretched flat and black to the Goodwins, with here and there a star-gleam in it, so little did the brushing of the delicate breeze tarnish the mirroring power of that moonless breast of sea. But next morning when I looked, a very forest of shipping filled the arena of the anchorage. Nearly every species of craft had come together in the darkness, and there they lay with a strong south-westerly wind blowing through them, and a sea running with weight enough in it to put the largest of the structures into motion. It was a true sea-piece; with its sky of pale liquid azure, its large stately-sailing masses of cloud rising with a milk-white softness off the coast of France; the water a dark and sparkling green, rich and flashful with heads of froth, and the vessels of all

sorts in the heart of the windy day coming and going in light and shadow as the eastern sun sank into or leapt from the edge of the bodies of vapour. In every vessel's side, lifting wet from the brine, shone the glory of the morning in stars—a ceaseless winking of white fires like flashes from artillery. Upon every head of sea, as it broke against the bows of the ships and went smoking away upon the wind in a mist of crystals and diamonds and prisms, there was painted a little rainbow. Where to witness the like of such combinations and contrasts of colour as I found in the Downs that morning I believe I could not say. The slate-coloured metal plates of steamers; the brilliant wet black sides of sailing craft; the white and ebony lengths of broken ports; the dancing gleams of brass and glass; the red, the blue, the green of bunting; the lines of radiant flags, denoting the ships' numbers; the vision, past all these anchored craft, of an upward-bound vessel chased by a tug—a structure foaming through it from some antipodean port under full breasts of canvas that clothed her in marble-white cloths from her waterways to her skysail-masts—such an assemblage of tints, such effects of graceful movements, such variety and play of light and gloom, of bursts of glorious splendour and of sullen violent shadow, I have never before witnessed.

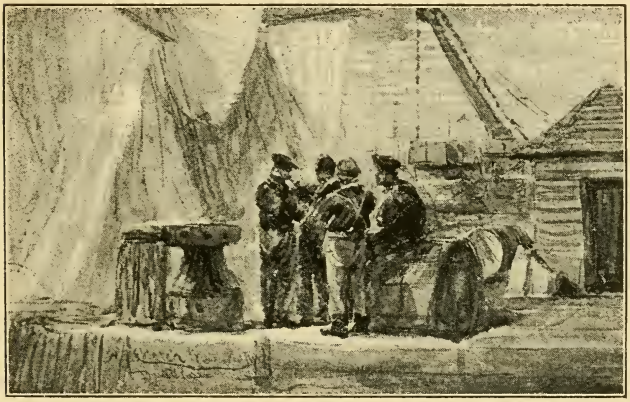
Conspicuous amongst the shipping was the galley-punt—a craft that hails from Deal, and that is to be met with only in these waters—under a fragment of lug, with three men of a crew sitting to windward.

She was sweeping with the ease and buoyancy of the gull over seas which were making even the brigs and barques round about bow to their hawsepipes. She is, I suppose, the one illustration yet extant of the skill of the Deal boatmen. The famous lugger survives, but she finds little employment. High and dry she lies upon Deal beach, suggesting times when smuggling was a roaring trade, when fresh anchors and cables were in constant demand, and when her crew by the work of a week might earn money enough to set them up as gentlemen for life. Her services are scarcely needed nowadays, and such slender shipping requirements as yet continue hereabouts are supplied by the galley-punts. They are the carriers of the Downs; they act as bumboats; they serve as a communication between the ships and the shore; they convey pilots to vessels; and in all weathers may be seen roaming about in search of jobs. They are stoutly built boats, but undecked, and therefore require such handling, having regard to the seas they encounter, as only men who have been brought up to the work from boyhood are equal to. The launching of these little craft from the beach ranks very prominent amongst the interests of Deal. When a boat arrives from a cruise she is hauled, by means of a tall and crazy-looking old capstan, high and dry up on the shingle, where she rests until there is occasion to "go off" again, as it is called. There must be a bad beach of surf on to hinder her from starting when a summons comes, so expert are the fellows who man her, and so dire

are the wants which the long winter begets. Figure a lead-coloured day, a gale blowing out of the east, an horizon shrouded by rain and sleet to within a mile or so of the shore. Some steamer looming large in the flying haze is sighted; she has a pilot to land; there are a few shillings to be earned; the boat must be launched, and a crew of three, helped by others, spring to release her. The surf is large and thunderous, and one looks on, making little doubt that the boat will fill and be rolled on shore again as she slips into the white and throbbing dazzle. But nothing of the sort happens; her gunwales are seized by a number of muscular hands, and down the slope of peebles she rushes with roaring keel, her crew tumbling into her as her stern smites the yeast. In a breath she is off and away, clear of the surf and the breakers, and a few moments later you will see her foaming through it to a flattened sheet, now sinking, till nothing but the yard of her lug shows, now soaring till she hangs poised like a toy on some flickering head of sea dissolving in a wide rush of froth under her.

This sort of interest is wanting at Ramsgate and Broadstairs. It is peculiar to Deal; and it is a survival that contributes not a little to the old-world, salt-water flavour of the place. At Ramsgate and Broadstairs the 'longshoremen own wherries, and are called watermen; but at Deal the fellows who put off are pre-eminently boatmen. The distinction may seem a little nice, but it is easily rendered intelligible by reference to the vocational practice of the men.

The Ramsgate or Broadstairs man will take you out for a row on a fine day; so, too, will the Deal man, but the Ramsgate or Broadstairs man does not think of getting a living by hovelling or hunting the waters in search of ships whose captains have a pilot to land or who want assistance in other ways; whereas this is precisely the dominant business of the Deal man.



On a Quay. From a sketch by David Cox.

He is a descendant of the old race of smugglers, not degenerate by any means in his view of the Revenue, but deprived of the opportunities his forefathers enjoyed—not because he is without a lugger or because the nights are no longer as black as they formerly were—but because smuggling, as Customs' imposts now go, scarcely repays a man for the very heavy risks which attend it. Some small "running" still goes on, of course, but it is of the

meagrest sort, and cuts a most insignificant figure alongside the old great hauls of silk and tea, of tobacco and spirits. What is it now if it be not a little pocketful of black cakes of tobacco ?

But though Deal was the headquarters of smuggling in the time when a frigate lay in the Downs, and detachments of her crew were sent ashore to protect the Revenue under the name of "blockaders,"—prior to the establishment of the preventive man, as we now have him—such romance as the contraband traffic possesses must, I think, be sought for down among the cliffs in Pegwell Bay and in the white chalk range betwixt Ramsgate and Broadstairs. For there you have the genuine thing in the shape of the old smuggler's lair; winding corridors hewn out of the solid chalk; secret subterranean retreats, whose grave-like stillness is scarcely vexed by the dull voice of the sea washing the base of the natural ramparts. The sympathies of nature seem to have been enlisted by the Ramsgate and Broadstairs smuggler; and though the signs of his pickaxe are very visible, yet the exploring of one of his corridors might make one fancy that old Earth herself had gone to work for him, had made a home for him in her heart, and pleasantly concealed him by growths of greenery above and by boulders and convenient spurs below. Refuges and storing-places of this sort at Deal are artificial. There are no cliffs, consequently holes could not be made; and the smuggler had to build what he wanted. Many smugglers' houses in the old town are still standing,

and their occupants are incessantly making fresh discoveries of secret places; of such a very shrewd, constructive genius were the race of contrabandists possessed. A wall is to be papered, and to the general surprise a small panel, yielding an aperture big enough to receive the figure of a boy, is exposed. When it is penetrated a short flight of mouldy steps are encountered, and to the amazement of the tenant two or three rooms, of whose existence the oldest inhabitant apparently had no knowledge, are disclosed. There are probably now people at Deal who would not recognize as their own the houses they lived in were the mysteries of the buildings laid bare.

Broadstairs has a charm which many might think superior to the quaintness of Deal. Its short length of pier has a black-letter look, that, be its age what it will, still carries the mind back to the days when the passing ships lowered their topsails in salutation of the figure of the Virgin Mary in the little church hard by the spot that is spanned by the arch. Charles Dickens loved the old town, and printed some delightful things about it in his serials. The high and windy building he occupied stands like a foreland lighthouse, and we should think that there must have been times when the imagination he exercised for the novel he wrote there abandoned itself to concern for the safety of the windows. That Bleak House, as it is called, should never have been unroofed is not a little surprising. It looks every quarter of the wind in the eye, and certainly nowhere on the east coast does it blow harder than where the

structure memorable as the residence of the famous novelist defiantly opposes its glass and its chimney-pots to the elements. Broadstairs has a pretty bit of foreshore. Its bight of yellow sands has a wonderful air of English homeliness, of genial and hospitable warmth. The wherries in a group of bright colours ride quietly in the shadow of the old pier; the surf sings with the note of a fountain as it slides up and down the heap of shingle to the left; and a true marine 'longshore garnish is present in the form of the "Tartar Frigate Inn," with its sign of a ship that carries the fancy back to the days of the famous Captain Lockhart, the terror of the hardiest French privateersmen. There is no more popular resort than Broadstairs, but it attracts a sort of people very different from those who crowd the lodgings at Margate and Ramsgate in summer. It is quiet, it is exclusive, and exactly fits the word "genteel," that was good form in the heyday of the little place.

There are no marked contrasts, however, in the shore-going features of this district until you get to Sandwich. The change from Broadstairs to Ramsgate is not very pronounced; but the change from Ramsgate to Sandwich may be compared to a swift transition from Cheapside to a country churchyard. At Ramsgate, in summer-time, all is bustle and crowd; the streets are alive with excursionists, the atmosphere is hoarse with the throats of costermongers, pianos are in every room, and German bands at every corner. But at Sandwich, in the very

height of the summer, the same deadness and stagnation of the fossilized condition is visible. All is hushed; the air is flavoured with a smell of dust, and a coldness as of the decay of centuries penetrates the system, even in the dog-days, as one enters this venerable and fast-crumbling relic of ancient times. I never think of Sandwich without regretting that it is not preserved as an old ruin might be—in the integrity of its own mouldiness and decay. The senses are shocked by innovations here: the gas-lamp, for instance, affects one as a wrong; what should illuminate these grass-grown streets, these dim and leaning houses, but the quivering lustre of the oil-flame staggering windily in some swinging lanthorn of horn or of crude glass? Why should there be a modern water supply? Why not some picturesque town pump, or some immemorial well, from which the soldiers of Cæsar might have refreshed themselves, or with which the warriors of Edward III. moistened their parched tongues? Sandwich still has the curfew; but what can be her theories of picturesque fitness when, despite such another antique knell as rings for all time in Grey's "Elegy," the town suffers a real policeman to walk about the streets, draped in the Corporation livery, and looking on the whole very much like a policeman of Deal or Ramsgate? Everything should be in keeping here. We construct lath-and-pasteboard structures to represent old English streets; but at Sandwich you have the real thing as Queen Elizabeth viewed it, as generation after generation has known it; and the

hand of the improver should not be allowed to meddle with it. The spirit of antiquity is on the side of Sandwich, and makes a sort of sacrilege of the application to the aged town of all ideas animated by modern sentiment. There is a regatta, for intance, it is ludicrous to think of a regatta in connection with Sandwich; let us talk of a morris dance, of Maid Marian, of the antique caper-cutting of fast days and feast days; but not of regattas *here!* The very river flows to and from the town in a sort of senile trickling, and a kind of violence is done to its narrow banks and its bed of slime—in which I believe the great ship of Pope Paul still lies buried—by the clamours and impertinences of the modern aquatic festival.

Sandwich is like an old black-letter book upon which one could long continue to pore; but it is stranded high and dry; it yields but a glimpse of the sea, and the marine interests of the district are at a distance from it. It is to Deal and Walmer that one must come for a sight of the Downs! and he who has the good fortune to sight this little space of narrow sea when it is full of shipping, whether it be by night with the high moon riding, or by day when the gale is fresh, and the seas are running in snow, will carry away with him a memory which he will not let die.

CHAPTER III

DOWN CHANNEL.

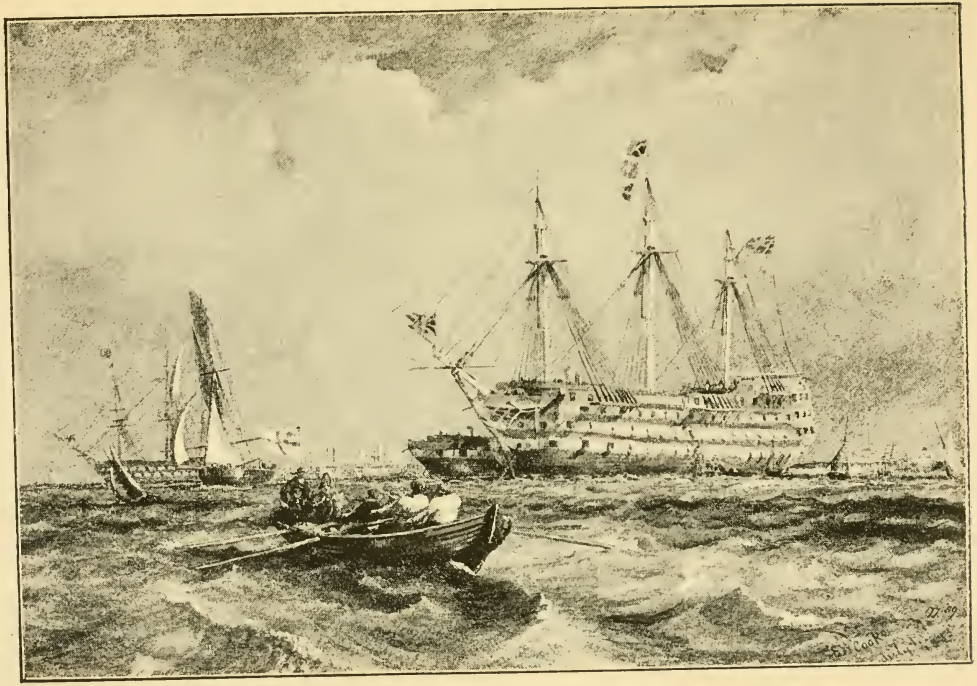
Thames below bridge—The docks—Historic interests—Gravesend—Speed of steamers—Passenger ships formerly—Dover and Folkestone—Lydd—Romney—Hastings—Eastbourne—Brighton.

I SUPPOSE there is no river in the world comparable with the Thames in the variety, beauty, and human significance of its shows. It does not take very long for a man to pass from one extreme into another: from the summer colours and garden-like elegance of sloping emerald lawns, of structures of grace and charm, of a surface of steel-bright water mirroring the white shapes of swans, and reflecting in its margin whatever of tender shadow or of refulgent hue its banks have to paint upon it; to pass, I say, from all that is reposeful, gentle, and engaging in mile after mile of purely English scenery, into the noise and business of the chocolate-coloured stream, as it muddily foams against the supporters of London Bridge and sweeps its flotilla of dumb barges into the aromatic regions of Bugsby's Reach and the Isle of Dogs.

It may be, however, that a man is not to be

charged with want of taste for avowing that his sympathies are rather below than above bridge. The swan, the angler, the houseboat, the lock, the little sparkling creek sulking off into some verdant niche of bankside—upon such things the eye will dwell with a delight that presently languishes; but the attention must be of a very flimsy sort that is to be easily wearied by the scene of the Thames from London Bridge to Gravesend, and on yet to where the shores of the noble river dissolve upon the oceanic atmosphere off Sheppey.

I am acquainted with no more interesting voyage than the run from some one of the docks of the Port of London—as high up as you will—to Gravesend. My own special leaning is towards the East India Docks. From them it was that I always sailed away when I was at sea as a sailor. The very name awakens a crowd of ghostly memories. Once again the old Brunswick Hotel is in "full fig," doing a roaring business, with hungry midshipmen, fresh from twelve months of "salt-horse," eating roast-beef and delicious cauliflowers with the voracity of sharks, whilst their pleased papas look smilingly on; the air resounds with the tempestuous shouts of Jacks at the capstans warping in or out; ships, which carry one back to the days of Nelson and the East India Company, seem to abound; there is the *Bombay*, for instance, that might have fought at Algeciras with Saumarez, or that might have conveyed Clive to India. I suppose there are sailors who find the change in maritime life as marked at



Old Ships in the Medway. From a drawing by E. W. Cooke, R.A.

St. Katherine's or Milwall as in the docks in the Isle of Dogs; but, to my fancy, the transformation never seems more acute than when I emerge from one of the little dirty carriages which convey you from Fenchurch Street to Blackwall and look about me. Here, what is new is accentuated by what is old. Yonder, for example, is a fine, new Cape steamer, embodying everything that is most modern in the shape of engines, electric light, ice compartments, pumps of prodigious power, and the like, lying abreast of a warehouse that has received the commodities of ships which were lifting frigate-like heights into the fog-thickened air of this part of the world when our gracious sovereign was a little girl playing upon the Ramsgate sands. The great docks down the river are new; the ships which use them are in keeping. What should fit the colossal undertaking at Tilbury but the leviathans for which its giant repairing cradles are contrived? One looks for nothing less than for structures of 6000 tons after one has rounded out of Bugsby's Reach and is in the fairway for the Barking and Erith and Gravesend tracts. But there yet lingers a deal of homeliness in the shipping huddled within ken of the Tower and within bugle call of Shadwell and Limehouse and Deptford. It is even possible hereabouts to recast the panorama of the ages; to note the old Margate hoy floating onwards, loaded with bilious holiday-makers; to witness the stemming barge as Cooke painted her; nay, even to view with the eye of retrospect some smart priva-

teering schooner off Erith with her seasoned and determined company of men busily employed in taking in powder ready for Monsieur Woodenshoes, and especially for those straggling Dons who, like the stray silver spoons to the Irish footman, were peculiarly regarded as the picaroon's "perquisites."

For a thorough enjoyment, however, of the smoky scenery and active interests of the river past London Bridge, one should carry to the contemplation of it a sort of dreaminess of observation. The impressions produced should have the kind of material vagueness, the unsubstantial massiveness as of mountainous clouds, so to speak, which the atmosphere of the great stream obliges the object it encloses to exhibit. To say that "yonder is Deptford;" that "*there* are the West India Docks;" that "that place abreast is Woolwich;" and so on, is to say nothing at all. Recollection can take no heed; when everything is over the stern there is still little or nothing left to muse upon. The river scenery here must be surveyed in groups, and designations are a species of impertinence. Let yonder concentrated forest of spars, gay with bunting, suffice. As we lean over the rail of our speeding ship there are begotten a hundred half-fancies, sensations, emotions, imaginations of an unfinished kind which individualization must annihilate. Campbell has expressed the fancy that possesses me:—

> There is a magnet-like attraction in
> These waters to the imaginative power
> That links the viewless with the visible,
> And pictures things unseen. To realms beyond

Fishing Boats. From a picture by J. M. W. Turner.

Yon highway of the world my fancy flies,
When by her tall and triple mast we know
Some noble voyager that has to woo
The trade winds and to stem th' ecliptic surge.

The coral groves—the shores of conch and pearl,
Where she will cast her anchor and reflect
Her cabin-window lights on warmer waves,
And under planets brighter than our own.

The historic interests of the eastern reaches of the Thames stand high above those of all other rivers. The Mersey, with its spacious range of docks, is undeniably more impressive, but there is a majesty in the memories of the Thames which enters like a seminal principle into the aspect of the renowned stream, and gives it a dignity not to be matched by rivers a thousand leagues long and shoreless to the eye that centres them. All about Erith and Gravesend is classic ground, if one may apply the word to this liquid highway. Here one beholds again with the gaze of fancy old Sebastian Cabot taking a farewell of the gallant company of men under the command of the lion-hearted Sir Hugh Willoughby; here, again, one views that sumptuous little ship, the *Daintie*, bearing the banner of the renowned Sir Richard Hawkins at her masthead, sweeping stately through what was then most undoubtedly a surface of crystal, her quarters radiant with gilt, her stern flashful with glass, her sides of a toy-like grimness with the little grinning artillery of those days of brass popguns, her decks glittering with the many-coloured apparel of her shipmen and with the glancing of armour aft—for Sir Richard was one of

those mariners who went to sea in a suit of mail. Here, too, one reconstructs the past in a vision of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fielding aboard that terrible little Lisbon packet, whose master, the most insolent of sea-bears, was, to the universal delight of posterity, forced to go down upon his knees in the cabin and respectfully apologize to the great novelist. Who can see Gravesend without thinking of Fielding—of the bowsprit of the little cod-smack shearing like the blast of a twenty-four pounder through the cabin window into the state-room where the novelist and his wife and others sat at breakfast; of the sea-blessings which were heaped upon one another by the crews; of poor Mrs. Fielding's miserable toothache; of the gout, the dropsy, the complicated anguish of the author of "Tom Jones," bound on a voyage that was to end only in killing him after causing the great spirit such sufferings as must grieve the most insensible, even in these late days, to read about?

Gravesend has been very happily termed the Sea Gate of London. One is sensible of the felicity of the expression as one sits at a waterside hotel-window and views the noble marine processions outward and inward bound. Gravesend is the great point of departure. You hardly seem to have said farewell to the old country whilst you are gliding down the Thames to the revolutions of a propeller or in the wake of a tug; but once let the helm be starboarded for The Hope, with the old town of Gravesend in a looming heap astern fast veering out of

Dover. By H. T. Dawson.

sight, and then, though you have the whole stretch of the English Channel before you to measure, yet the voyage seems to have really begun. You will presently be opening the deadly shoals to the northward of the Goodwins—the Sunk, the Long Sand—names which must needs sound sinisterly in the maritime ear for their tragic associations of shipwreck, for their memorable traditions of human suffering and of magnificent courage. Yes! Gravesend is truly the Sea Gate of London. For many a long hour in my time have I sat witnessing the scene of Thames water from the pier or from some other good point of view, never wearying of it, incessantly finding something stealing into view to catch and detain my eye at the moment when I was about to turn away. It is the huge ocean steamer fresh from an American port—some colossal National liner with sides of a scarred look from the blows of the tall Atlantic surge; it is some outward-bound Peninsular and Oriental steamer smart with paint, with window-cleaning and brass-polishing, skipper and mates twinkling in buttons and lace like real Royal Naval men, the flutter of ladies' dresses, a black man cradled at the extremity of the awning holding a little flag.

Somehow or other, leave-taking—tearful and choking as it must always be—seems to my mind to lack the profound significance it used to possess. What with an average speed of twelve knots an hour and what with the Suez Canal, the other side of the world is brought, so to speak, just round the corner.

It is like saying good-bye to a man who is about to enter his brougham and whose house is at the other end of the town. But in my day there was distance at sea—the distance of *time*. This entered into one's good-byes and made them almost as solemn as a death-bed farewell. Four months to Australia! three months' stay there, and four months for the homeward passage! What was to happen in eleven months? But now one talks of *days*. "I passed your house at Ramsgate," wrote a friend of mine, the captain of a large mail steamer, to me; "it was half-past five o'clock in the morning, the blinds of your bedroom windows were down, and no doubt you were taking an off-shore cruise. We were doing a cool fourteen." Just so. His ship was doing a cool fourteen, and in some thirty days or so from that date all her passengers would be ashore at Dunedin or Otago, having measured the parallels of the two Atlantic Oceans, and every meridian from Agulhas to the distant Pacific coasts of the Maori. Thirty-four and thirty-five days to New Zealand! One cannot weep very bitterly over a parting that is to interpose between us and those we love a piece of water so narrowed by time that even when the voyage is ended we still feel as though within hail of those left behind.

Very different from "cool fourteens" was progress in my day—in the sixties, alas! so fleetly works the Scythe, so remorseless is the run of the Sand! I very well remember one of the ships I was aboard of occupying a whole fortnight in beating down

Hay Barges off the Reculvers. From a drawing by T. S. Robins.

Channel from the North Foreland to Plymouth Sound. Such endless goings about! such distraction of sea clamour! Passengers groaning, every timber straining, every treenail with a shriek of its own, the pigs under the longboat filling the air with their lamentations, the water up to a man's waist in the scuppers, and the vessel herself always most abominably heeling over on one tack or the other, plunging viciously and going to leeward like a balloon under her bands of topsail with the yards fore and aft. I have a lively recollection of being in a hired troopship at the back of the Goodwin Sands through a long, roaring, black November night. The craft was a thousand-ton ship stuffed full with raw Irish recruits all deadly sick to the uttermost man. They lay helpless as logs of wood upon the deck, and the sailors, to come at the ropes, had to run over them. Every time the ship went about—nearly every half-hour, I should think—the poor soldiers rolled like casks into the lee-scuppers, where they lay in a mass of floundering figures, too ill even to be profane. Figure this sort of thing with the Goodwin Sands close aboard, a night of ink so thick that a light had to be under your bow to see it, cold as Nova Zembla—for as Lord Nelson truly said, Deal and the Downs are the bleakest places in England—and the wind steadily growing from top-gallant breeze into a howling gale from the southward and westward.

Not much of the coast scenery of the English Channel comes into sight in the run down, after the

tug has cast your ship adrift or your steamer has gone clear of Dungeness. The one who gets the best sight of the noble or tender or romantically ugly points of the coast must be the yachtsman; after him, possibly, the coaster; only that the crew of the collier, of the little butter-rigged trading schooner, of the barge, or indeed of any other of the craft whose business it is for the most part to keep the land aboard, are not commonly comprised of persons remarkable for their appreciation of nature. A little brig blowing leisurely along within cannon shot of the beach may be accepted as typical. If the old skipper in the tall hat directs his eyes at the land, it is not to admire the many beauties he may be abreast of, but to find out how fast he is going and what the shore has to tell him in the way of bearings. His old wife, sitting in the companion-way, continues to darn or knit for a whole watch together without diverting her gaze from her work, unless it is to fasten it upon her husband's pimpled and purple countenance. The fellow leaning in the doorway of the little caboose, smoking a pipe with its bowl inverted, is in all probability meditating rather upon the sign of "The Three Thirsty Sailors" (with which house he is well acquainted) than upon the sparkling and pretty picture the town in which that tavern is situated presents in the crisp morning light as it lies directly in the wake of his sight.

It must be the yachtsman, then, who knows the coast as it deserves to be known. He creeps from port to port in his bland and elegant little fabric of

yawl or schooner. He is often becalmed for hours at a stretch opposite some spacious and gleaming terrace of cliff, or some low foreshore rising with twenty alternations of hues into a blue atmospheric perspective of hill. He has the leisure, and, as we may know by his literature, the taste to dwell with emotions of delight upon the scores of varying pictures which the progress of his little ship unrolls shorewards—a very tapestry of marine colour and subject.

It must be admitted, however, that there is not much to look at after Gravesend has been dropped until you are abreast of Margate and rounding the bold point of North Foreland, when you have the whole stretch of Downs under your forefoot. The pictures from this point are numerous. Of Dover and Folkestone as towns there is little to be said—with enthusiasm at all events—when you are *in* them and surveying them as an assemblage of precipitous streets and level rows of houses; but from the sea nothing shows more prettily along the whole line of seaboard down to Penzance. Much is owing to the magnificent domination of the marble-white heights of cliffs here. The dim land of France hovering in a cerulean mirage above the snow-like gleam at the extremity of the horizon, gives a startling significance to the majestic natural walls of Dover. It would seem as though nature had specially constructed this part of our island home with a view to the theories and ambitions of those gentry across the way whose forefathers kept many generations of British

Admirals riding in the Downs keenly on the look-out. The fall to the flat plains of Lydd is somewhat abrupt, as though all the chalk of the immediate district had been dedicated to Dover and Folkestone. Sandwich, perhaps, is a more lamentable instance of the effects of a retreating sea upon the hopes and prospects of men than Lydd; yet next to Sandwich must, I think, stand Lydd as a melancholy example of the disastrous consequences of too much Ebb. There is not a more stranded place the wide world over. Compared with Lydd, Winchelsea is gay, giddy, and festive. Nevertheless, a man might own without reluctance to having lingered awhile upon the water off the miles of billowy shingle to gaze with mingled pleasure and astonishment at the vast surface of pebbles motionlessly counterfeiting the swell of the ocean, and brimming into a distance which there is little more to define than the dark square tower of the venerable church of Lydd. Man here submits himself to the imagination with something of the desolateness of the seabird. I figure the lighthouse people as dutiful but spiritless to a degree; and the figure of the solitary coastguard might well pass as Robinson Crusoe masquerading in the costume of the preventive-man, and keeping an eager look-out for Friday, who is hourly expected in his canoe.

Hastings viewed from the sea has but a formal and insipid appearance: I am speaking of it as a town. Despite its antiquity there is no glow of warmth, few or no suggestions of the shading of

Hastings. By J. J. Chalon.

time in the exterior it submits to the seawardly eye. St. Leonards, in a structural sense, is also defective in qualities of boldness and tint. More must go to the production of picturesque effects than bay-windows and houses of four or five stories. The Marina is an agreeable lounge, and after the bleakness of the Forelands district the temperature here might be accepted as quite West Indian. The sovereignty of the demon of flatness, whose cradle and whose home must surely be Romney Marsh, abruptly ends before Hastings heaves into view. The land is now hilly and swelling, with here and there features which come very near to being grand in their way. Fairlight Down is indeed a regal eminence, and an object of commanding interest and beauty viewed from the sea.

Eastbourne has the distinctive merit of Beachy Head. This triumphant rampart of chalk and cliff rising to a height of nealy six hundred feet, makes handsome atonement for the defects of the land about Hythe and Dungeness. One finds another suggestion of nature's anxiety that Britannia should sentinel herself, in this noble rise of cliff. By this time the Channel has made a wide stretch. The coast of France is seventy miles distant, and, therefore, the giant on the look-out hereabouts must be a head and shoulders taller than the Colossus whose eye is upon the Dover Straits. What is to be said of the Sussex shore from Seaford to Selsea Bill? Brighton is between, and Newhaven, that dirtiest of little towns, whose utter and entire dismalness not

even the memory of "Mr. Smith," nor yet a slashing wet day, can deepen. Supposing ourselves on board ship, however, these are places of which we shall not obtain a glimpse. It would certainly not be worth a shift of the helm to survey the front of Brighton town. One must look very close here for what is picturesque, and then, perhaps, after peering narrowly, find little that is effective outside some old wherry bilged in a shaggy nook of cliff. It is noteworthy that in this country the most popular "resorts," as they are called, are the least pleasantly situated of all the considerable towns and cities of the realm. Could anything be more flat and *triste* than the Isle of Thanet? No resolution to make the best of what cannot be helped can manufacture a romantic or engaging vicinity for Dover and Folkestone. Had George IV. occupied fifty years in making a choice, he could not have selected a more barren and inhospitable neighbourhood for that Brighton which we may take it his presence and his patronage created out of the Brighthelmstone of an earlier period.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN CHANNEL (*continued*).

Isle of Wight—Cowes—Shipping in the Solent—Bournemouth—Weymouth and Bridport—Torquay—Plymouth and its Sound and scenery—Falmouth from Pendennis Castle—Penzance—Mount's Bay—Newlyn—Cardiff, its docks and streets.

In the warm months one is readily advised of one's approach to the Isle of Wight by the white canvas of yachts hovering in the blue distance like wings of gossamer. They are the butterflies of the deep, announcing that summer is at hand or has arrived. There is something wonderfully proud, yet tender, too, in the aspect of the southern majestic terraces of the Isle of Wight. From the summit of St. Catherine's Hill you command an elevation of hard upon eight hundred and fifty feet, as though the coast of France, more distant yet from this point, must be proportionately watched by some Eye of Old England, whose giant owner here has stepped a pace from the mainland and stands, knee-deep and isolated, gazing.

It is impossible to imagine a set of pictures more delicate than those the interior of this little gem

of Channel land offers to the gaze that centres it. Cowes, divided by its rippling stream of river, I do regard as the sweetest, toy-like, most charming, memory-haunting spot in Great Britain. All is garden-like and of an exquisite refinement. I seem to find such airy delicacy of atmospheric effect, of floating fabric, of rooted structure ashore all about this little bit of island coast as is nowhere else to be matched—indeed, I may say, as is nowhere else to be witnessed. The impression left is that of having surveyed a mass of fairy-like work wrought in ivory. There is a suggestion of littleness here of an especial sort of choiceness, with the grace of a dainty prismatic radiance over all; the Solent and Spithead are little seas; the shipping is little, by which I mean the shipping that is proper to the island—the yachts; the sheer hulks of old line-of-battle ships do but seem to accentuate with their clumsy looming forms the charm of minuteness. Heave your ship to off Ryde, and look at the little town: it has the appearance of a toy-town incomparably well finished; it produces the same sort of fancy you get at Table Bay, where, though the houses be of the average size, every dwelling is dwarfed into elf-like dimensions by the towering mass of Table Mountain, at whose gigantic foot from a distance the white dwelling-places appear to nestle. The adjacency of Portsmouth and of the Southampton Docks higher up supplies these waters with the most composite of imaginable sea-pictures, for here may be seen the British yacht, the British merchant

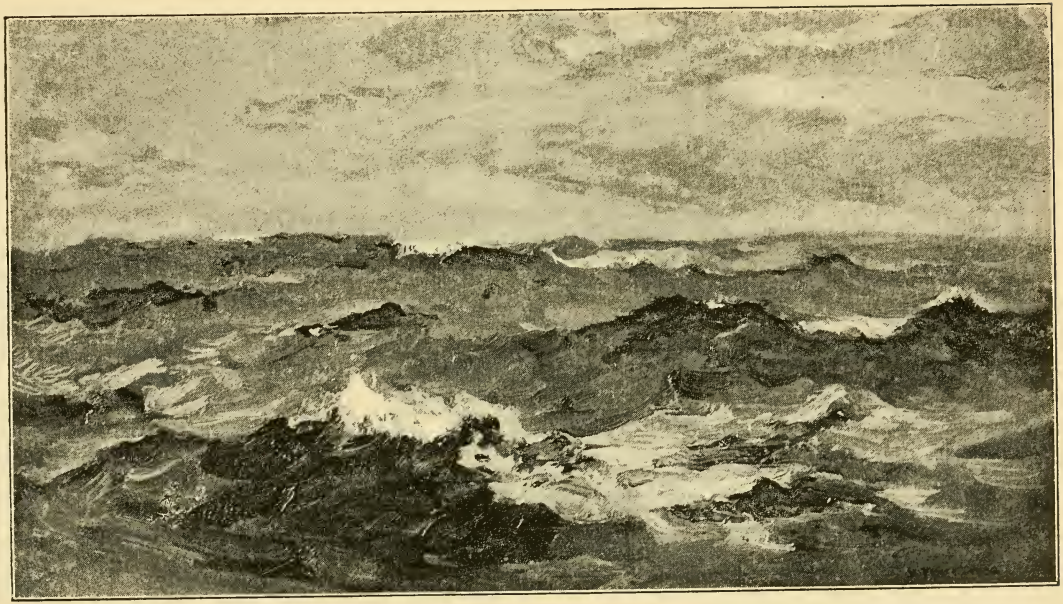
In Portsmouth Harbour. By J. R. Wells.

man, and the British man-of-war, in the highest form of development. Our maritime domination is nowhere better suggested. The crimson cross is much, but it is the red commercial flag that makes it everything, and, as though a detail were yet wanted for the completion of the represented sea interests of these dominions, there is the gay bunting of the pleasure craft always at hand. As some massive leviathan metal structure with five masts and two funnels, with here and there a dot of red, where a marine keeps guard, and some admiral's flag at the fore or mizzen floats into the field of sunny waters, a noble ocean steamer, fresh from Southampton Docks, bound to the United States, to the Cape, to the West Indies, her decks full of passengers, her appearance out and away more graceful and but a very little less imposing than that of the armour-clad, speeds under the warship's stern for the Solent faster than a gale of wind could blow a clipper ship along; hard by, glancing through the satin-like surface, is a schooner yacht, her canvas of a milk-white softness, her figure-head burning like a golden star, her glossy black sides trembling back the glory lifting off into them from the sun-touched waters, through which her keen stem is ripping as a knife shears through silk. These are but types; figure, then, the assemblage of scores of them with fifty variations of build, of rig, of dimensions—the torpedo boat, the old collier, a lustrous royal yacht some North German Lloyd craft, all windows and wings of steam! The catalogue cannot be con-

tinued, but the spectacle is something to live for ever in the memory.

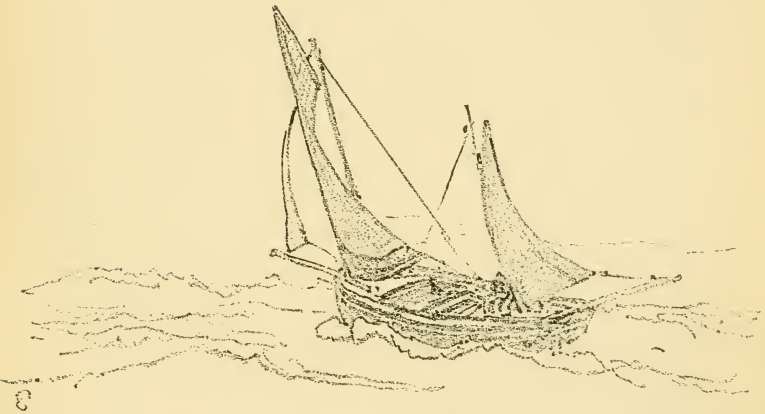
The woods and hills of Bournemouth make a pleasant picture of the town. No nobler expanse of water could be asked for than the great bay that lies within the embrace of Hengistbury Head and Ballard Down. The climate of this place is a noteworthy feature, but much too much stress, I think, is laid upon what is termed "the advantage of the odour of the pine-woods." Few people have suffered more from rheumatism than I, and I do not scruple to pronounce pine entirely worthless as a remedial agent for this disease, whether in the form of "odours," or in the more defined shape of turpentine or terebene. But, nevertheless, Bournemouth may be honestly termed the best place to reside in, during winter, on the coast. It is not incessantly raining there, as at Plymouth; the wind rarely blows with an edge; yet Bournemouth combines with a pleasant temperature an elevation that lifts its population above all risk of the obnoxious exhalations of flat lands and their inevitable marshes.

But we must needs be in a little ship to witness this scenery. Assuming ourselves to be towing down Channel, or aboard some big ocean steamer out of the Thames, we shall most certainly see nothing of Bournemouth, nor of the rest of the line of coast that forms the western frame of the extensive bight down to Durlston Point. Indeed, Portland High Light is about as much as we may expect to behold by night, whilst by day there is nothing to look at,



Waves. By Henry Moore, R.A.

unless it be a mere film or blob of land, faint as a fancy, in the remote distance. But aboard a coaster or a yacht we are at liberty to crawl pleasantly around, past Swanage and St. Alban's Head into that large and pleasant bay in which Weymouth is situated. The coast has a fine curve here, and though low and flat to the north, rises at Jordan



Off Looe Island. By Henry Moore, R.A.

Hill to a height of a hundred and sixty feet, with an eastern trend of picturesque cliff, broken and rugged with steep ravines.

The eye is impressed by the abrupt rises and falls of the land hereabouts. The best charm, perhaps, of Weymouth lies in its extrinsic qualities of agreeable country. What the local guide-book would call "walks," are very numerous. There are some solid antiquarian interests also; the Well of Rodwell, for

instance, Sandsfoot Castle, one of the defences of Henry VIII., and contemporaneous with the well-known castles at Walmer, Deal, and Sandown. In the churchyard at Wyke Regis lie the remains of eighty of the people who were drowned in the wreck of the *Abergavenny* in 1805. The loss of this fine Indiaman is one of the most memorable in the marine annals. The tradition is preserved fresh and green to this hour, and I have somewhere read—though I cannot quote my authority—that in calm weather, when the water is clear, the remains of the wreck are visible.

The beauties of the coast thicken and grow richer as you proceed on your westerly course. Bridport: a volume might be filled with descriptions of this district only. There are twenty features of positive magnificence betwixt Rotherwood and Eggardon Hill and Lewesdon alone. Then there is the quaint little town of Charmouth, an ancient Roman station, and a free borough so long ago as 1320. It is a very garden viewed from Catherstone. Sailing past Exmouth—Devonian to the core in scenic beauty—past little Seaton and Sidmouth, whose harbour, like others along this line of channel coast, is filled with sand and rendered useless without hope from the dredger, and Exmouth, with its shelter of Withycombe and Woodbury Hills, and Dawlish, one of the most lovely of the gems which jewel this sea-washed line of land, and Teignmouth, that, to be viewed aright, should be beheld when the sun is low in the west, and when the air is crimson with the expiring beam

A Visitor for Jack. After Hamilton Macallum.

—we heave our little ship to off Torquay, and spend a long hour in leaning over the side, admiring as perfect a piece of Channel scenery as mortal eye could wish to rest on.

The town is a crowd of villages built upon hilly ground exquisitely vivid with perennial growth. The guide-books shock the idealistic memories which one carries away from this place by irreverent talk of imports, of harbour dues, and other vulgarities of the commercial life. This is very well when one has to deal with Southampton, with its fine docks, even with little, grimy Newhaven and its excellent breakwater; but the very name of statistics sounds upon the ear as a sort of violence done to such a fairy-like spot as Torquay.

But we must push on, and with a glance only at that opening in the coast which would admit us to the spectacle of the beauties of Dartmouth, we head for Plymouth Sound, and let go our anchor for a little spell inside the Breakwater. My last recollection of Plymouth is of a night-time of glorious moonshine. The planet stood high over the Sound, and amidst the pear-like haze in which the atmosphere lay steeping there sparkled the powerful light of the Eddystone, the gleams on the Catwater side, and a little hovering constellation of the riding light of ships. In the heart of the tremulous, greenish, silver wake of the moon lay the massive, motionless shapes of two ironclads. The hush of the night was upon the scene. I could not distinguish the faintest creeping noise of surf. At intervals some clock

ashore would strike and set a number of bells tinkling in the Sound, but seawards the repose was grave-like, without anything to vex it in the subdued hum of life floating up to the Hoe, on whose summit I stood, out of Plymouth town.

Whoever has visited Sydney will witness in Plymouth and its stretch of waters and adjacent shores a copy of the noble Australian bay in little. Drake's Island floats like an emerald in quicksilver; the greenery of Mount Edgcumbe, with the bright and vivid spaces of sward, falls to the very wash of the water, where it sips the salt. Penlee Point makes a dark and massive object beyond. Eastward the point is crowned by the green and reddish heights of Staddon and Batten Castle. The scene of Catwater, to as far as Laira Bridge, has a beauty beyond the power of the pen to express. The space of green beach, the smacks hauled up for repair, some old hulk perhaps to be broken up, a group of quaint cottages, far away the dark blue of the Dartmoor Hills and ranges of limestone cliffs, extravagantly quarried; here is such a combination as the brush of the artist could alone convey. From where our little imaginary ship is lying we see the grass-clad Hoe surmounted by handsome houses, the spires of churches rising past them, and a foreground of ironclads, smacks, full-rigged ships, and ocean steamers, not to mention the little training-brigs, which no nautical eye can view without delight as a memorial of the days when ships of the State truly walked the

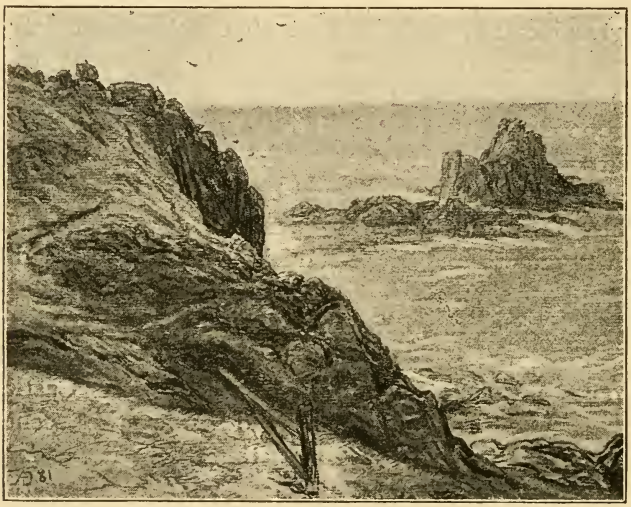
Ironclads off the Lizard Lights. By J. R. Wells.

waters like things of life, when their vitality was that of the wind and their grace that of the sea-bird.

Even the Scotch mists which are very unpleasantly common here will communicate a new element of beauty to the Sound by the mere effect of revelation. The smother comes rolling down out of a clear blue sky, and very wetting and intensely disagreeable it is whilst it lasts, but its gradual clearance is a succession of noble hints. Massive green and reddish heights seem to shoulder their legal proportions out of the thickness; the ships ooze out one by one; a windy flash of pale sunshine trembles upon some steel-blue space of water; then the azure heavens open to the horizon, and all Plymouth and her Sound lie radiant and laughing before you.

Falmouth, too, is another of our west-coast ports whose hundred beauties beggar description. Quit your little ship and make for Pendennis Castle, and from that vantage-ground survey the scene, and you must own, I think, that there is nothing fairer to be witnessed in all England. It is the same whether surveyed from lofty summit or from low foreshore. The summer fields, bearing their yellow harvest, slope in shining billows of gold to the dark blue water. The crystal surface of the creek mirrors the white cottage or the leaning tree with the delicate glory of reflection that you notice in an image shining upon a soap-bubble. Afar the tall hills swell in splendour under the sun, and blend with the distant azure till their sky-

lines become an illusion, and one knows not where the earth ends and the firmament begins. Near to where your anchor has taken the ground rises the Black Rock; on the port side is St. Anthony's Point, rearing a cream-coloured lighthouse, and clothed with the rich foliage that is everywhere



The Armed Knight Rock, Land's End. By A. Ditchfield.

superabundant. In the Carrick Roads are a number of craft, some of them very large ships; every vessel flies a colour, and every colour has its tint mirrored in the still water upon which the vessels lie as though bedded in a sheet of glass.

But one must quit the deck for the shore to obtain anything resembling a satisfying view of

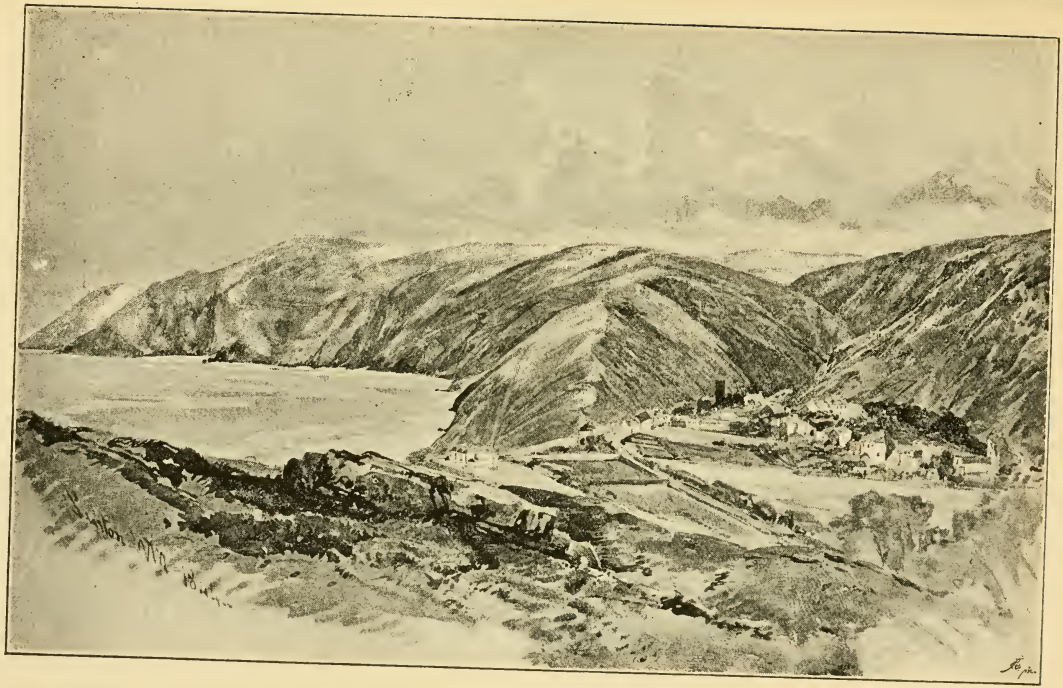
Falmouth. Pendennis Castle gives you the command of vision you need. In the north-west the land is covered with houses; roofs glow and windows sparkle; the inner harbour is gay with little shipping, with yachts and small steamers; the Helston Hills are beyond, and far away stand the phantom Carnmarth Hills. From the beach of Gyllyng Vaese to the distant Manacle Rock the eye follows the bright green land as it slopes to the dark crag and the brown sand. To the right of you are wide stretches of fields flanked by the glittering brows of the St. Austell Hills, with a sight of St. Mawes' Creek and its little nestling village, and further away, past Carrick Point, is the Dodman.

Meanwhile the atmosphere is sweet with the aroma of a luxuriant vegetation. The perfume of the exotic plant and of the wild flower is in it, for here is a country where the melon needs no hothouse. The wild strawberry grows side by side with the wild rose; it is the land of plenty, and particularly of clotted cream.

There is an absence of all conventionalism at Falmouth and about its district that is soothing and refreshing in the highest degree. Its moral atmosphere seems tempered by the drab-coloured qualities of the many members of the Society of Friends who dwell here. It is somewhat strange that so much loveliness of seaboard as we find in this part should be without houses. Is it too far distant for the rich yachtsmen? There are creeks which are like glimpses of Paradise. In these land-locked waters

it is conceivable that there should reign a perpetual summer. And he who has explored the River Fal has knowledge of as much fairy-like loveliness of scenery as any portion of this habitable globe has to submit to his gaze.

Penzance is an exceedingly quaint little town. It opens upon you as you round into Mount's Bay, and is like a finishing touch to the impressions you have received from the magnificent scenery of the Devon and Cornwall coasts down to this point. I am not sure that the run by rail is not more prodigal in its yield of memories of beauty than the coastwise trip; for ashore, as you travel along, it is one moment some river shining with summer glory, then league-long stretches of blue moorland closing upon green and yellow distances, then a little sheet-like space of lake or arm of water mirroring perhaps a boat half full of people indolently rowing; then a sudden rent in the green land, with a glad disclosure of bright blue sea beyond; and always the locomotive is winding you through acres of swelling, tree-covered land, past noble bays and dark and frowning cliffs, with here and there a sight of some wharf, at which a little cluster of colliers are swinging their cargoes in and out. The scene from the esplanade at Penzance must, I think, be held out and away more romantic than when the picture is viewed from the water. This, to be sure, is a matter of opinion; I write from my own impressions. I have come ashore and stood looking seawards, and found myself charmed to a degree I was certainly insensible of when aboard.



Lynton. By W. J. Müller.

The hills, rich in vegetation, which back the town, make a fine setting for the houses. The little island called St. Michael's Mount, with its stronghold of a house on top of it, is rendered a very delicate creation by distance. As you look out upon the ocean there are the lofty Marazion Hills upon your left; the town of Marazion lies in a white huddle at the eastern foot of the range, and the dark blue of Cudden Point goes stealing and melting into the silver azure of the Lizard district. To the right of you the coast shows in green, and gold, and yellow, and down upon it, not very far distant from Penzance, are clustered the singular structures of little Newlyn, with the odder and quainter Mouse Hole further on.

I have a very clear recollection of Newlyn. Viewed from afar it is a really exquisite picture, with its grey-white structures standing out upon the background of softly shadowed, wooded slopes. It might belong to the sixteenth century in respect of modern scientific appointments. It knows nothing of drainage; it is without gas and without pavements. When I was at Newlyn it had a population of between 3000 and 4000 people, the males of whom were principally employed in the mackerel and pilchard fisheries. As mere sights one should be very well satisfied to have seen Penzance and Newlyn In the summer-time the hills and the district round about, rich in the beauties of the harvest, are a perpetual feast to the eye. There is no magic in ink to reproduce the colours, the shadows, the play

of light, the effects of the moonbeam in this part of the English coast. Cornwall, I think, must be the despair of the painter in prose. One can only look and dream; the most eloquent expression of one's sensations must prove but the most flippant impertinence in the face of the truth.

Taking Cardiff as our final port, I own it is not without pleasure that I find it time to shift my helm for the prosaics of that remarkable town of docks. The mind, almost wearied with romantic splendour of the coast, long after that point has been rounded where old England, in the name of the Land's End, expires in a final effort of two or three rocks, turns with honest hope of refreshment to a part of the British foreshore that is without grace, and whose interests are entirely human. Whoever is acquainted with Cardiff can talk with melancholy conviction of one immensely long street, which, of a Saturday night, is crowded in parts almost to suffocation by processions of every species of human being, whose legs remain unwearied even after midnight has struck. Here may possibly be encountered representatives of all the Jacks in the world, from China to Peru. Humanly speaking, then, Cardiff is of some interest; otherwise, there is but little of it that the memory will much care to preserve. It is true that St. John's is a fine old church, and the castle has been made a very wonderful interior of by Lord Bute, whose father, in creating the docks, created Cardiff. But one must go to those same docks to be entertained. There is

The Mumbles, Swansea Bay. By J. S. Cotman.

no scenery within the reach of a walk round about Cardiff; all is business and hurry. It is not hills and lakes, crystal rivers and enamel'd meads, but ironmasters and coalfactors, shipowners and shipbrokers, timber merchants and attorneys. Supposing one's little ship to have been docked, a walk to the end of the pier will enable one to obtain a view of the place. The scene is extraordinarily full of vitality. The eye bends carelessly upon the Somersetshire coast looming somewhat vaguely across the grey sea; upon the brown heaps of the Flat Holms, and the Steep Holms, and Bream's Down, and upon the towering acclivity of Penarth Head, from whose church you may look forth, from an elevation of about two hundred and fifty feet above the ocean line, upon the distant Welsh hills, where the valley of the Taff divides Garth Mountain from Caerphilly. But when the gaze comes to the docks the attention is promptly arrested. You witness a vast forest of masts, and yards, and funnels, intricate as a cobweb with the complexities of standing and running rigging, and gaudy with the flags of all nations. Tugs are plying, dredgers are working, sailors are chorussing, locomotives puffing, and the offshore wind is charged with odours of the produce of the world. It is to pass from the romance of nature to the romance of human industry to arrive at such a scene as this after the line of coast we have been glancing at as we came along. There are some noble passages of district in the shores which form the Bristol Channel, and from

St. David's Head, or, say, from Milford Haven, to Barry Island, there is much to be seen to deepen the delights of a summer cruise. But it dwells most upon the memory as a foreshore of business. It is not easy to dissociate it from Swansea, with its docks; from this same Cardiff at which we have halted; from Newport, that infant giant of a place, and from those gates of the Avon—Portishead, and the Avonmouth Dock. But enough has been said. To proceed now would be to land us in a very waste of dock statistics, than which I should say there is nothing, unless it be the Tonnage Question, more profoundly uninteresting.

CHAPTER V.

THE WIGHT AND THE SOLENT SEA.

Southampton Water in the early part of the yachting season, before the cruisers have gone to sea and the western regattas have attracted the racing fleet to the sailing matches in other ports, presents an aspect grateful especially to the yachtsman, but which cannot fail to make glad every heart that loves the sea. The craft have been hibernating like the chrysalis throughout the colder months. Stript of every rope and spar, they have lain on the mud of the Itchen shore, or at Gosport, where their denuded masts show in the winter like a thicket of dead tree-stumps. It is now July, and, like the butterfly, they appear in all their proper garb to sport in their own element. As the ebb-tide runs swiftly past, they seem to strain on their anchors as if they would be free to go with it to the open sea, and there frisk and frolic with their old playmates, the wild sea-waves. The hull that spent the winter high and dry on the cold, cheerless shore, now new-blacked, sits pleasantly on the stream. The varnish no longer disfigures the deck, which shows an immaculate white. Figure-heads and brasses glisten like precious metal in the sun's rays, and the slender topmasts slowly wave to

the summer breeze as the boats rock gently on the water.

It is a graceful sight, this fleet of yachts lying between Southampton and Hythe piers as close as they can with room to swing. Here are steamers, whose burthen would suggest a commercial employment, but whose real use is declared by their graceful lines and man-of-war smartness. Some of them are known in the Spanish main and beneath the Southern Cross. Cruising schooners there are, and yawls and cutters, that have traversed great oceans during many seasons, though they look as fresh as if they had but lately parted company with the stocks. Here also are bold little cutters, in which the landsman will tell you that you could not "swing a cat," but on which practical amateur seamen have weathered many a gale in the Channel and the "Bay," and are ready if needs be to do so again. Here are some of the heroines of past racing seasons challenging comparison with formidable new-built boats, yet untried, but of which much is spoken and much is hoped, for the designer has exhausted his art upon them under a commission from an aspirant to racing honours, who will be content with any cost provided his vessel cannot be beaten. Here lies, the cynosure of all eyes, a cutter which before many days will sail bravely across the North Atlantic sea to make a bold endeavour to bring home again the Cup won by the *America*, and since so jealously guarded by the centre-board vessels, which show no desire to come hither for more. From yacht to yacht, and from

In Southampton Water. From a drawing by Barlow Moore.

the fleet to the shore, steam launches, gigs, cutters, and dingeys, are busily plying, for greetings have to be exchanged amongst those who meet here annually, and stores brought aboard. The afternoon train also has brought down owners released from business or from pleasures not less wearying, and guests fortunate in the prospect before them, fortunate in friendship which will stand the severest test known in social intercourse, a lengthened sojourn in the close companionship of a yachting cruise.

When evening falls, the tall spars look taller in the growing gloom, burgees are hauled down, and anchor lights begin to show in the deepening twilight. Down the water those of Calshot brightly gleam. The north-western sky, in the direction of the Test's mouth, where in old days the great logs of trees felled in the forest used to lie awaiting towage to Portsmouth, gives promise of sailors' weather. A little later, the yachts' fairy lights are all aglow in a grove of masts and shrouds but dimly seen. Cheery sounds of mirth are carried over the water from many a deck. From a distant schooner, a girl's sweet voice comes blended with the notes of her guitar. From the forecastle of a nearer vessel is heard the muffled music of a band such as only performs in a yacht's forecastle. The crew have leave to make merry to-night in their boyish, delightful way, for to-morrow they sail. They will drop down the water with the morning's ebb, to seek the open sea beyond the Needles, and then to go wherever pleasure may lead.

It is a time for reverie. Perhaps the mind will travel back to the days when this scene of present peace and pleasure knew bloodshed, rapine, and war. It must have been somewhere near the present site of the Docks, that Canute, after the capture by storm of the old town, had his regal chair brought down to the edge of the Trianton, to prove in a practical manner that he really could not control the ebb and flow, whatever might be the view of his sycophant courtiers as to his power in that direction. One wonders whether he himself was not a little more disappointed, when his ancles were moistened by the disobedient flood, than the histories of our youth would make us believe. It certainly indicated some degree of chagrin to refuse to wear his crown, and to send it "to be set upon Christ's head at Winchester." Old Hanton town, which Canute and his Danes captured, was sacked in the wars of Edward the Third's reign by a party of marauders from Genoa. Stow gives a quaint narrative of this event :—

"The fourth of October, fiftie galleys, well manned and furnished, came to Southampton about nine o'clock, and sacked the towne, the townsmen running away for feare ; by the breake of the next day, they which fled, by the help of the countrie thereabout came against the pyrates and fought with them, in the which skirmish there were slaine to the number of three hundred pyrates, together with their captaine, the King of Italie's sonne. To this young man the French king had given whatsoever he got in the kingdome of England, but he being beaten down, cried 'rancow ;' notwithstanding, the husbandman laid on him with his clubbe until he had slaine him, speaking these words : 'Yea,' (quoth he), 'I know full well thou art a Francon, and therefore shalt thou dye.' For he understood not his speech, neither had any skill to take gentlemen prisoners

Breaking Waves. By Henry Moore, R.A.

and to keepe them for their ransomme. Therefore the residue of these gennewayes, after they had set the town on fire and burnt it up quite, spedde to their galleys, and in their flying some of them were drowned, and after this the inhabitants of the towne compassed it about with a greate wall."

Considerable parts of this "greate wall" are still to be seen, buried for the most part (the Bar Gate is a notable exception) in the slums of the modern town. There was, until quite recently, a good view from the water of the fine old Bridewell fortress; but that has been interrupted by the interposition of a warehouse, which no doubt may prove commercially useful, but is not a satisfactory substitute for the picturesque remains which it hides.

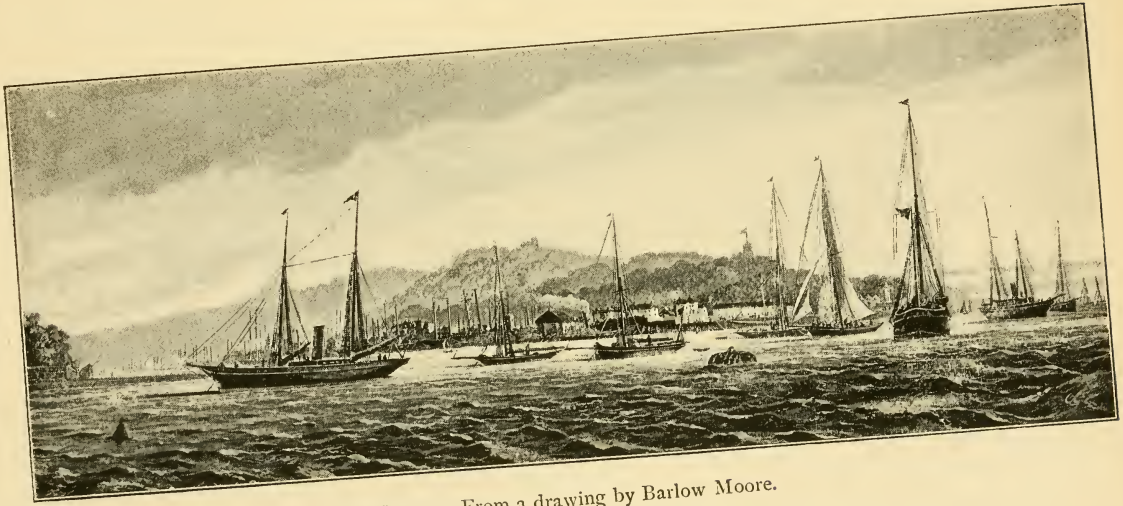
Southampton is indebted for its popularity as a yachting centre to the proximity of the Isle of Wight. Indeed, to all ports of the Solent, that famous isle has always been "et decus et præsidium," since the far-off days when the Phœnician mariners, and, after them, the Grecian galleys and ships of Armorica, brought thither the merchandise of the Mediterranean to exchange it for the tin of the Cornish mines. At a later time, Drayton thus sings its praises:—

"Of all the southern isles, the first in Britain's grace,
For none of he accompt so neare her bosom stand,
'Twixt Penwith's furthest point and Goodwin's quechy sand;
Both for her seat and soyle that's farre before another,
Most justly she accounts Great Britain for her mother."[1]

And in our time the Wight has secured the warmest admiration of Sir Walter Scott, who has left on record the impression it made upon a mind

[1] "Polyolbion." Song ii.

pre-eminently appreciative of lovely scenes in his description of it in the "Surgeon's Daughter:"—"That beautiful island, which who once sees never forgets, through whatever part of the world his future path may lead him." To one sailing from Southampton to Cowes, when abreast of the Calshot Spit, a comprehensive view is presented of so much of the Wight as is washed by the Solent Sea. Seen from this point the general character of the island is flat, but the Southern Downs rise high in the blue distance to relieve a landscape otherwise tame. For it must be confessed that the point just suggested as one from which the island should be viewed, is recommended by the extent rather than the beauty of the scene displayed. The "fair isle" is always fair, but to appreciate its majestic aspects you bear away to sea beyond Hurst Castle and the Needles. Not yet, however, for you will have caught a distant glimpse of the Roads of Cowes, sufficient to compel a nearer view. The Roads are occupied by a fleet of yachts, such as nowhere else in the wide world assembles. Great steamers, which it is hard to believe serve the luxurious but wholesome pleasures of individuals. Sailing yachts of every size and rig, designed some for racing speed, others for the ocean voyage, gay with bright and varied bunting, amongst which is predominant the white ensign (which the vessels of the Yacht Squadron alone are privileged to fly), here cluster round the great hull of the ship of war, whose presence amongst the graceful craft that fill the Roads, indicates the near neighbourhood of



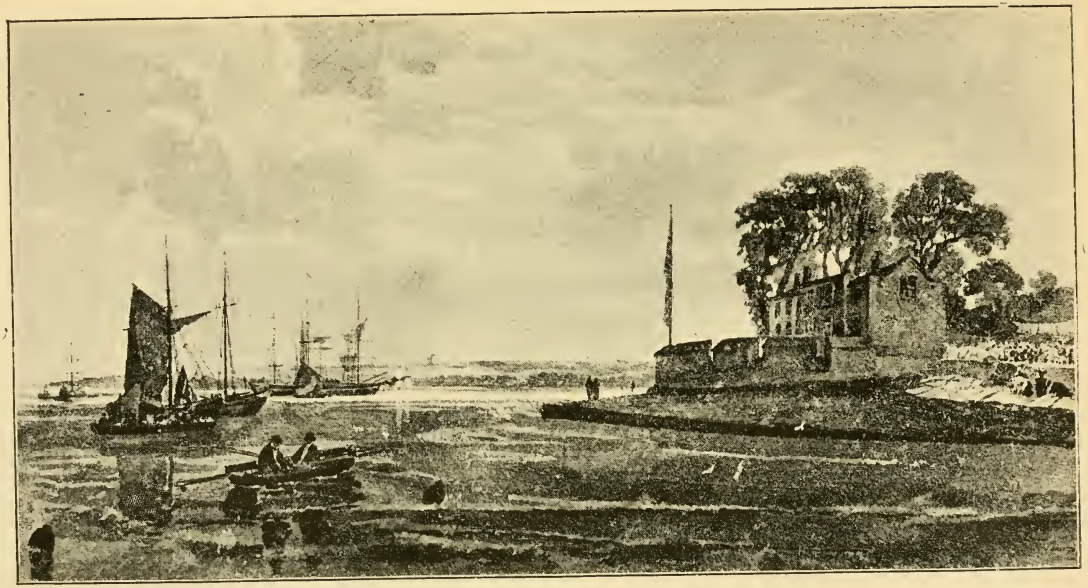
Cowes. From a drawing by Barlow Moore.

the monarch herself. The "yellow leopards of England," extended by the breeze from the main of one of the royal yachts, proclaims that there is a prince aboard who loves the sea as Britannia's princes should. Time was when Cowes was a commercial port of importance, and as such knew palmy days. A brisk trade with the American plantations in their early age was here maintained. At a later period, good profit was made in provisioning the ships of war, and large fleets of merchantmen would lie off the Medina, waiting for the wind to take them down Channel or for the convoy promised from Portsmouth. Those days are gone, but Cowes is famous still, for it is *par excellence* the place of tryst and tournament for yachts, and the Yacht Squadron, if it be proud and exclusive, is the chief of yacht clubs. The Club occupies the old blockhouse fort, on the west of the Medina, which was built in the reign of Henry VIII. Another, similar, stood upon the eastern point, which has long since disappeared. These were deemed very formidable in their day, and Leland said of them that they were wont to "roar in great thunder where Newport enters stately Wight." [1]

To-day we see Cowes at its best and brightest, for it is the morning of a great event—a race for a Queen's Cup. The rising sun saw the crews busily at work upon the racing craft, weighing anchors and stowing them below, sending ashore gigs and dingeys laden with spare spars and cabin tables. Sails have been uncoated and set with anxious care

[1] Leland, "Cygnea Cantio," v. 560.

—one reef earing rove in the expectation of a breeze likely to freshen as the day grows older. For though it has been a morning of dazzling brightness, occasional catspaws now fitfully ruffle the water, and sundogs stream down from the fleecy clouds, and there are other signs of wind not lost on the wary skipper. At present there is just enough to stretch the wings of the competing ships, some of which are already reaching on and off in the neighbourhood of the mark-boat, awaiting the signal to prepare, the sails meanwhile being critically watched by the mate, who directs from time to time yet another pull on the halyard or sheet. As the time appointed for the start approaches, the racing fleet gathers closer, the vessels now running before the wind with sheets pinned to ease the pace, now gibing, now wending. The premonitory gun is heard, and each skipper is intent upon the other's movements, striving for the weather gauge and place of vantage. Two vessels are luffing with this design, and another, sailing obliquely too near the line, is observed from the castle to have passed it. With grief and chagrin she sees her recall numeral hoisted and pays dearly for her rashness. Ere she can come about and take a station behind the line the signal is fired for the start. Her competitors are away like hounds from the leash, and have left her at a disadvantage which good fortune and good seamanship will with difficulty retrieve. The latter may do much in this earlier part of the race, for it is a dead beat to the wind-



The Old Blockhouse Fort, Cowes. From a drawing by De Wint.

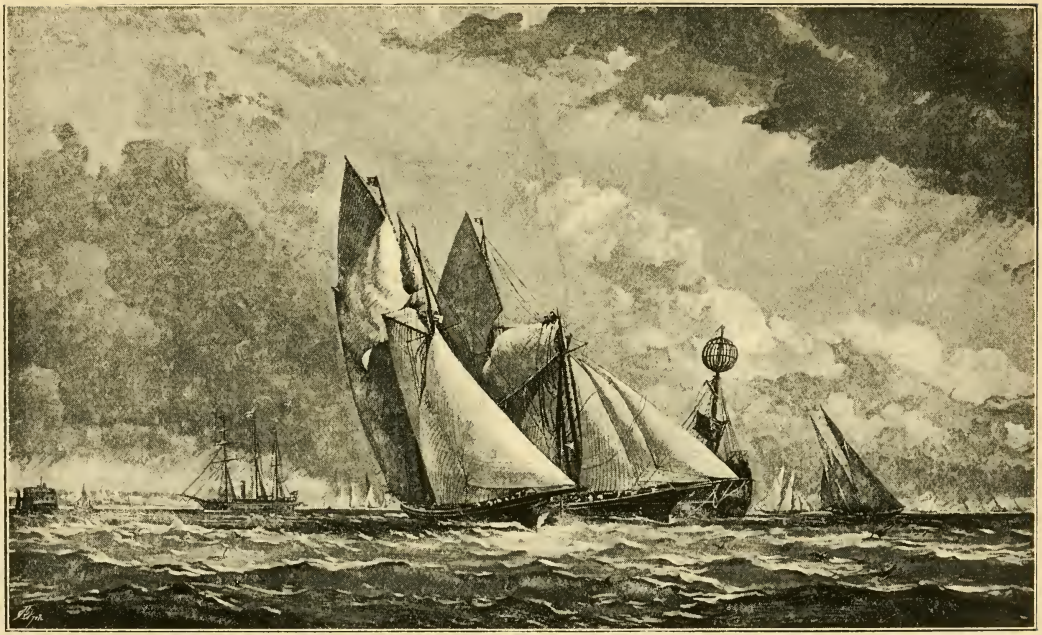
ward and Lymington Spit. This is not regretted by those who, like ourselves, are following the fast racers on vessels less fleet in the wind. The tide serving, all work the island shore past Egypt Point.

To the west, beyond this point, is Gurnet Bay, between which and the mainland opposite at Leap, there is said to have existed in very old times (that is to say where history and fable blend, so that it is impossible to separate them), a dry, or at any rate, a fordable connection. An obscure passage in Diodorus Siculus, whose information with regard to the geography of Britain was probably both scanty and vague, is responsible for a good deal of bold speculation and heated controversy upon the subject of Victis having been an isthmus at a period within the range of tradition. That a branch from one of the Roman highways led to the Hampshire shore at Leap is pretty well established. That the tin was conveyed to the coast by this road is probable enough; that it was conveyed to the Isle of Wight is certain, for it has been found in considerable quantities along the line of the old Roman road, which ran from Gurnett Bay through Newport to Puckaster. If there is anything in etymology, we may safely conjecture that Stansore Point was that of the departure of the tin from the mainland. After all this it remains an open question whether it was carried by boat or not, and that with a strong bias of probability in favour of the boat. Bede thus states what he had heard of the Isle of Wight:—"It is situate

opposite the division of the South Saxons and the Gewissæ, being separate from it by a sea, three miles over, called the Solente. In this narrow sea, the two sides of the ocean, which flow round Britain from the immense Northern Ocean, daily meet and oppose one another beyond the mouth of the river Homelea, which runs into that narrow sea from the land of the Jutes, which belong to the country of the Jewissæ; after this struggling together of the two seas, they return into the ocean from whence they came."[1] The historian thus accounts for the well-known phenomenon of the double flood in the Solent; a tradition that the island had once been a part of the mainland could hardly have escaped mention by him, had any such existed in his time.

But this has been a digression. We are following the now scattered fleet of racers down the western arm of the Solent. The promise of the morning is fulfilled, and the wind blows every minute with greater force. Each squall shows more strength than its predecessor, and the riplets swell to small but angy waves as the frequent gusts harass the water. The sky, too, wears a threatening aspect, and is loaded with great clouds rolling up and over one another. One vessel has lost her bowsprit, and, bearing up disconsolately, runs home to her moorings. None carry topsails now, but all are under snug canvas long before the turning-point seaward is rounded.

[1] Bede, Ecclesiast. Hist., iv. 16.



A Yacht Race. By Barlow Moore.

As we hold on our way to sea, we pass through the fleet; the vessels running home for the Brambles before a spanking breeze, some regain positions they had lost in beating to windward.

Standing in on the port tack for Lymington River, you must needs go about when still far from the shore, for great banks of mud now choke the estuary. Yet there was a time when it was free enough to expose the old town to much harassing from French pirates and freebooters, who twice set it on fire. At the beginning of the last century, great ships (as vessels of seven or eight hundred tons were then considered) found easy access to its wharves. Now even the once famous saltpans are forgotten. Repelled by Lymington Spit, our vessel heads for Yarmouth, and there it is well to bring up, unless you can carry the tide through the Needles. There is safe anchorage in Yarmouth Roads, and at times also a rolling swell. It was here the Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles the Second) anchored his little fleet, when he landed his handful of loyal Hampshire men to make a bold but bootless attempt to release his father from Carisbrooke, where Hammond, his favourite chaplain's nephew, was his gaoler. The King was afterwards on *parole* at Newport, while negotiations were proceeding with the Parliament, both the negotiations and the King being jealously watched by the chiefs of the army. When it seemed that there would indeed be a treaty of Newport, these gentlemen resolved to act. In

Christmas week, 1648, "on a night of storm and rain, Ewer beset His Majesty's lodgings with strange soldiers and a strange state of readiness, the smoke of their gun-matches poisoning the air of His Majesty's apartment itself; and on the morrow morning, at eight of the clock, calls out His Majesty's coach, moves off with His Majesty in grim reticence and rigorous military order to Hurst Castle, a small solitary stronghold on the opposite beach there."[1] It was a grave offence that coming together of the King and the Commons, and both must be punished. To the King, the lonely wind-swept fortress, at the end of the projecting beach opposite Yarmouth, proved but a stage on the way to Whitehall. Colonel Pride was deputed to bring the House of Commons to its senses.

Having weathered Hurst Castle, we are now in the deep and narrow channel between Colwell, Totland, and Alum Bays, and the Shingles. The rushing ebb is ruffled by an opposing wind. The bowsprit occasionally dips into the crest of a sea, and the water coming through the scuppers forward swishes along the lee-deck, as we bowl along under a single reef. There is an appearance of a freshening breeze outside, and the prudent skipper thinks well to haul down a second reef. Therefore on our next tack, the jib is laid a-weather, the stay-sail lowered, and we lie head to wind. The weather-topping lift being hauled taut, the orders are given, as only a skipper can give orders, "Ease away the

[1] Carlyle's "Cromwell," 3.

peak-purchase,"—"Steady there,"—"Stand by the throat halyards,"—"Lower away a little,"—"Belay all." Every available hand is now put to the fall of the reef tackle. Meanwhile, the mainsail flaps and flounders in the breeze, and resents with loud roars of anger the effort which is being made to reduce its dimensions. But with a "One, two, three—haul!" they make fast, and in a moment later have tied the reef-points. Again the mainsail is peaked, the staysail set with a single reef, the vessel's head pays off from the wind, and again she is forging on her way. Clear of the Needles, the view ranges to the west beyond Christchurch Bay and Durlston Point to St. Alban's Head. To the east, the coast of the island runs away to the towering height of St. Catherine's. Given a bright sky, a fresh summer breeze, and a white edging of foam at the base of the cliffs, the sea thundering against the Needle rocks as if to bring them, like old Lot's wife, to ruin, and you will confess yourself well repaid for your beat down the Solent, and a wet thrash through the Needles.

Having weathered the Needles, and heading for St. Catherine's, the land is not well discerned after Scratchall's Bay: the stupendous Main Bench runs inland to form the bay of Freshwater, and is but dimly seen; but as you draw towards the headland, beyond Brixton and Chale Bays, the land again comes into nearer view, and the general features of the Blackgang Chine are perceptible. This interrupts the cliff, a little to the west of St. Cath-

erine's, in a place where it is over eight hundred feet in height. Two converging chasms join to form one declivitous crumbling gorge, from which, after heavy rains, the water is projected over the lower line of cliff in a cascade which falls unbroken for seventy feet. The seaboard is encumbered with huge masses of rock lying pell-mell in the wildest confusion. When the angry seas break furiously upon these, the thought occurs that the place was meant for shipwreck. Here, at any rate, in 1836, the *Clarendon*, West Indiaman, drove ashore in a gale of wind and was lost with all hands. To describe, with the detail they merit, the majestic cliffs and commanding promontories of this southern coast of the island; the still loftier downs that rise behind; the terraced towns nestling between the highlands and the sea; the chines that break the cliff at intervals, presenting at times the aspect of weird and awful chasms, at others of ravines leafy and picturesque,—to describe all this would, if done by an expert hand, form the material of an interesting book. Much has been written of the Undercliff alone, the result of a primeval landslip between the headlands of St. Catherine's and Dunnose, which has left the hill-side standing sheer for miles, like a wall of the Titans' building, while below lies a wrecked but beauteous mingling of rock and sward and water, the victory of nature asserting itself over chaos.

North-east of the Undercliff and the town of Ventnor, Dunnose is reached, the seaward abutment

of the towering heights of St. Boniface. Between this and the Culver stretches the open bay of Sandown. Off this part of the coast, especially with a wind off shore and a falling barometer, the mariner is warned to be on the alert for dangerous squalls blowing from the land. Terrific blasts descend from the uplands and bring destruction to the unwary. Thus perished off Dunnose, on a bright day in March, 1878, the ill-fated *Eurydice*. At half-past three in the afternoon she was seen from Ventnor by many who watched her with admiration, standing under all plain sail for her last headland, homeward bound with her crew of bright youths, ripe for their country's service, and now yearning for home after long absence. Before four o'clock, when almost in sight of port, she was struck by one of those awful squalls for which this coast is noted. This, before sail could be shortened, bore her over on her starboard broadside. The water rushed in through the open ports; she never righted, but in a moment sank, two persons only out of two hundred and fifty being saved. Never did a ship meet so heartrending a fate. Assuredly she was named in an ill-omened hour, for her lot was that of Orpheus' wife:—

> "Jamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnes
> Redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras,
> . . . . . .
> En! iterum crudelia retro
> Fata vocant."
>
> (VIRG., Georg., iv.)

Sandown Bay terminates in the bold escarpment

of the Culver, a dizzy height, upon the face of which the samphire-hunter to this day pursues the calling the awful perils of which are described by Edgar in the fourth act of "King Lear," a description which many believe was suggested by a visit paid by the poet to the Isle of Wight. Leaving the formidable Culver astern, our course lies across White Cliff Bay and east of Bembridge Ledge. With the Nab on the starboard quarter, we catch a glimpse of the land-locked Brading Haven. In the effort to recover this from the sea's domain Sir Hugh Middleton expended much money and energy, with less success than attended him in his New River venture.

But little now remains to complete our little cruise. Passing under the lee of the lightship on the Warner sands, we keep to weather of the fort, then head to windward, leave the Noman sands on the port hand, and come to anchor off Ryde. A line of low-lying forts breaks at intervals that flat shore that stretches from Gilkicker Point to Hayling Island. A little inland rise the frowning Portsdown Hills. We can discern, between the grim batteries of Sallyport and Blockhouse, the point that the fortifications which meet the eye on every turn on land and water are designed jealously to cover—the narrow entrance to the great harbour, which for centuries has been the nursery of Britain's naval prowess. Within, on the Gosport side, the tapering spars of the *Victory* and the *Wellington* are plainly seen, lit up by the slanting rays of the declining sun,

Off the Needles. From a drawing by Barlow Moore.

and recall the imperishable associations of the place. Hard by, on the eastern side, lies the pleasant Southsea Common, where in old days the strength of England was marshalled when invasion threatened; while in the intervening space the racing fleet is scattered over the Solent, beating from the Warner to the Brambles against a strong headwind —so strong, indeed, that topmasts bend and creak, and ropes are strained to the utmost as the vessels gracefully yield to the breeze, and dipping the lee rail in the rushing sea display on the weather side the burnished copper of their hulls. A yacht-race is not always to the swift, and cautious seamanship will often count for more than natural speed sailing on a wind. As we watch the contest a sad disaster overtakes the leading schooner. Her foretopmast, overtried in such a wind by the great foretopsail she has been carrying, has parted at the cap and fallen across the foresail gaff. Grievous the havoc and fled the hope of victory. Her more prudent rival, with sail clewed up, shoots by, jubilant at the other's mishap.

> "Illa noto citius volucrique sagitta
> Terram fugit, et portu se condidit alto."

CHAPTER VI

ST. GEORGE'S CHANNEL.

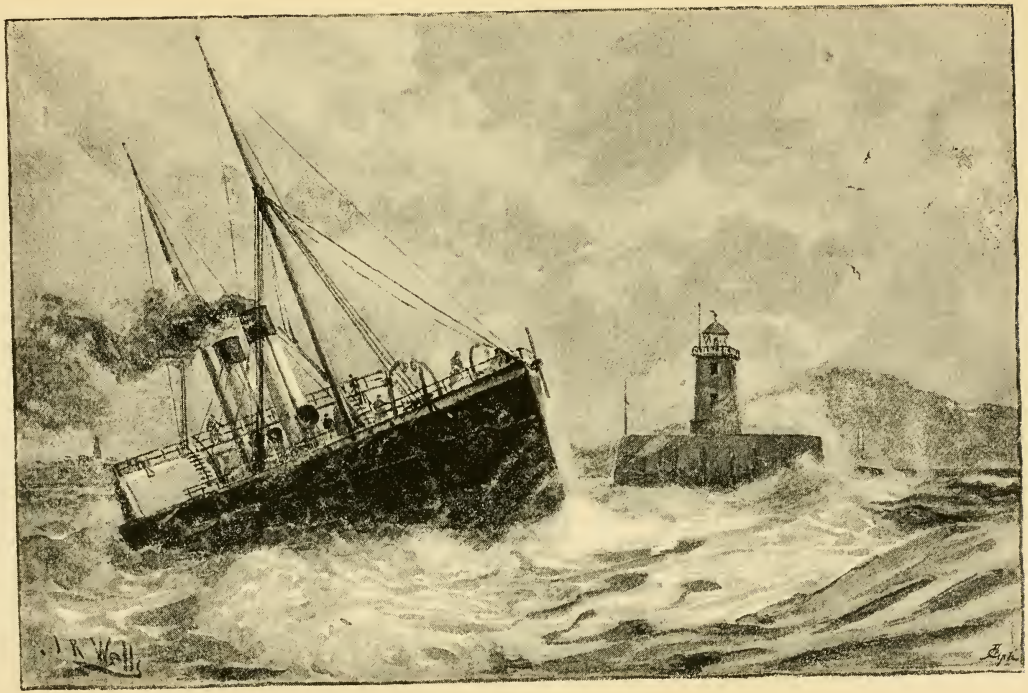
I HAD not originally intended to contribute a chapter to the present series of papers. It happens, however, that our distinguished contributor, Mr. Clark Russell, has not felt able to go further than the estuary of the Severn in his description of the coast, though he has promised to resume it later on the south-eastern side of the island. Other contributors will deal with Scotland; but the publisher has requested me, as a Lancashire man, to write upon St. George's Channel. I wish that my knowledge of the coast had been more recent and more complete. Unluckily I have no personal knowledge of the coast of South Wales, and shall therefore frankly borrow the descriptions of others. North Wales is, for me, bound up with the recollections of youth; the first sands I ever galloped over were the sands at Rhyl, and the first water I ever swam in was that of the Menai Straits. The Irish Sea was visible as a long thin line of silver, low on the evening sky, from the wild moorlands where I used to wander in my boyhood. On my early excursions to Scotland, I used to go a roundabout way by Liverpool in order to

enjoy the pleasure of the sea voyage from that place to Glasgow. Still it is one of the regrets of my life not to have made better use of the Irish Sea when I lived near it—a regret intensified just now, when it has become a duty to write about it. I learned the rudiments of sailing on the Lancashire coast, but if it were all to come over again, there is not a nook or a corner from the Severn to the Solway that I would not explore; and it may be affirmed quite seriously that a lad would understand his "Odyssey" better after knocking about through good and bad weather in a little yacht than by much fumbling of his lexicon.

The Irish Sea is a sort of little Mediterranean, having land at least on three sides of it, for Scotland would block the view to the north (if one could see so far), notwithstanding the escape to the ocean by the narrow north channel between Fair Head in Ireland and the redoubtable Mull of Kintyre. To the south the exit is much more open, yet between Cardigan Bay and the British Channel the land curves towards Ireland as if St. David's Head had a wish to meet Carnsore Point across fifty miles of sea. The basin, which is more specially called the Irish Sea, as distinguished from the two Channels, approaches more nearly to the circular form in consequence of the eastward retreat of the land on the coast of Lancashire and its advance in North Wales, so conveniently terminated by Anglesea, which makes the distance across to Dublin less than half what it is from the Lanca-

shire river Ribble. This little Mediterranean has two islands, or more properly one island only, for Anglesea is never felt to be an island when seen from the water, and is, in fact, no more than a broad promontory cut off from the mainland by a narrow channel that modern practical science has twice easily bridged over. The Isle of Man is a genuine island, well set in the midst of its own sea a little to the north, with a handsome margin of water all round it, and this bit of isolated territory, once a kingdom, rules rather grandly with its mountainous mass over its own expanse of waves. I confess that it has sometimes been a matter of almost personal regret to me, as a Lancashire man, that our little Mediterranean was not an archipelago, studded over with islands like the Cyclades; indeed, if we could but invite some of the Hebrides and Orkney Islands, so cold and uncomfortable up there in the north, just to come and settle amongst us in the Irish Sea, the climate would seem to them, by contrast, almost delightful, and for us there would be, in the way of sketching and boating, a positive increase of happiness. When I think of that lovely inland sea of Japan, with its numerous beautiful islands, a place to wander over endlessly in a boat, I feel a little dissatisfied with our own—yet it has at least a great variety of coast, and its waves wash three kingdoms and a principality.

The geography of the coast of South Wales may be remembered by its three principal bays—Caermarthen, St. Bride's, and Cardigan. The first is about



Dublin Steamer leaving Holyhead. From a drawing by J. R. Wells.

sixteen miles across at the entrance; the second, thirteen; and the third, sixty-four. The coast on the whole is dangerous, so that vessels give it a wide berth when their destination permits; and yet this dangerous coast has an opening that makes one of the largest and most perfect harbours in the world. The north side of the Bristol Channel is interesting for us by artistic associations. Turner was in this region when still in his youth, before the close of the eighteenth century. Some of his earliest work was done on the banks of the river Towy. In our day the name of Kidwelly has become famous in the art-world as the subject of one of Mr. Haden's etchings.

Tenby is one of the most fortunately situated places on the shores of Great Britain, with rocky heights, a castle, and a wide view over bay, and island, and shore. The situation is at the same time sheltered and commanding. It is sheltered from the south-west winds that beat into St. Bride's Bay across an unlimited expanse of sea (for Ireland is just too far north to protect it), whilst the east winds arrive at Tenby after crossing England and South Wales and troubling Caermarthen Bay. For shelter it is almost comparable to Oban, and the climate (being about three hundred and thirty miles more to the south) is more temperate. If this region reminds one of Western Scotland by its bays and islands, it carries the resemblance still further by the possession of a salt-water loch—a genuine loch that would have borne the title if it had been

north of the Clyde. There is nothing like Milford Haven in England or France. When nature undertakes to do anything in the way of engineering, she does it supremely well. The Menai Straits are a better maritime canal than Panama could be made with twice the sixty millions that it has cost. There is no artificial harbour like Milford Haven, with its "thirteen roadsteads, affording anchorage to the largest ships," its fifteen creeks and bays, and its fifteen to nineteen fathoms of water almost everywhere. Guarded by its sheltering hills, the fleets of England might rest at anchor on its waters. Such a haven is a great national possession; it is unfortunate only that circumstances have not favoured the growth of some populous commercial city there, such as Manchester, which is now creating a seaport for itself by a vast expenditure. The forces of Nature make natural harbours; commercial or military reasons determine the sites of cities. The town of Milford is remarkable as being one of the very few which have been built by a single human will,[1] as ancient cities were sometimes founded by the fiat of a despotic sovereign. It is easier to build a town than to induce a population to settle there. Milford has not been very prosperous, but now it is said to be brightening, and there is some animation in its once almost deserted streets. There were but three streets originally, and yet too many. Even old historical Pembroke, at the end of one of the

[1] That of the Hon. C. F. Greville, nephew of Sir William Hamilton, the diplomatist.

great bays of Milford Haven, is said to be a dull place, but it has the artistic and antiquarian interest of a great historical castle whose ruins occupy a promontory between two inlets of the sea. Salt-water lochs are, however, very rarely comparable to fresh-water lakes for the amenities of beautiful landscape, and Milford Haven has the usual characteristics of treeless hills and shores left desolote by the receding tides.

Yachtsmen know little of the coast of Wales, which is so dangerous that they give it a wide berth. I am fortunate in being able to quote from a vivid description of its perils. Mr. Richardson, of Bala, corresponded with me many years ago on the subject of lifeboats, and sent me a narrative, which is very little known, of "The Cruise of the *Challenger* Lifeboat, and Voyage from Liverpool to London in 1852." He coasted all Wales as far as Mumbles' Head, close to Swansea Bay, and kept much nearer to the land than a yacht would have done, as the *Challenger* was, in fact, a catamaran, drawing only nine inches of water with twenty persons on board, and able to go through the wildest seas with no risk except that of a wetting. The only inconvenience of Mr. Richardson's narrative is that he travelled from north to south, and we are going northwards. The boat, or catamaran, was rigged with two lug-sails and a jib, and her want of keel was remedied to some extent by centre-boards.

The *Challenger* left Caernarvon in very wild weather, towards the end of April. A sloop at sea

had her main-sail blown to ribands the same morning. The *Challenger* herself was obliged, five times, to let everything fly, that the sails might not be torn to pieces. "The coast was rocky and dangerous, the sea perfectly white with foam, and the Welsh mountains enveloped in clouds, with the scud whirling round and past, flying away to seaward. At times the sun shone brightly, and the scenery was magnificent." Near Porthdynllaen, the sea was breaking furiously on a lee-shore, and the *Challenger* nearly got upon the rocks, but she reached a place of shelter behind a rude breakwater. At the western entrance of the port there was a sunken rock called the Chwislan, which at that time was not marked. In the afternoon they ascended a hill behind the village, "and walked across the isthmus to view the sea on the opposite side, and visit a remarkable subterranean passage which its waves had excavated some distance towards the centre of the mountain, which then breaking out, wash up its sides, occasioning extraordinary sounds."

Boats with a very small draught of water often do things alarming to spectators on the shore. On leaving Porthdynllaen, the *Challenger* ran through a passage close to the western rocks, whilst the inhabitants, shouting to warn them off, believed they were going to destruction. "The coast is indented with miniature bays and creeks, and fringed and studded with rocks, for the continual breaking of the sea on them gives an appearance of fringe; and sea-birds and gulls of all descriptions are here more numerous

than on any other part of this coast." At Bardsey there is a well-known tide-race; but the *Challenger* passed it at a comparatively favourable moment, and "sailed across the bay called Hell's Mouth, which, in a south-westerly gale, must be a perfect Phlegethon." The crew take to their oars towards evening on approaching St. Tudwald's Island and Roads; then the wind, drawing round to the southward of east, they make all sail, and run ashore through the surf in Abersoch Bay.

The voyage is resumed on the following morning, when Barmouth is dimly visible, north of Cader Idris, about twenty miles away. "It was a beautiful wild row. We passed under a high, bluff-headland, covered with sea-birds, so tame that they permitted our approach within an oar's length. Sheep also appeared, perched on the points and ledges of the rocks hanging over the sea, and where they seemed to have scarce footing or herbage."

In this bay there is a remarkable shoal. The *Challenger* took soundings on passing over it, and found three fathoms and a half. It is attributed by tradition to human agency, and particularly to St. Patrick, who must have been truly a wonderful engineer. The southern extremity is at Sarnbwlch, and runs out to sea about five miles; the northern, off Harlech, extends for twenty miles, "and it is singular that at its extremity the compass loses its power and will not work. They are fearful and dangerous shoals to vessels embayed." The *Challenger* here met with squally weather, and struck on the

rocks near Sarnbwlch, but got off without damage, after which the crew had a row of seven miles, against wind and tide, to Barmouth. Detained here or in the neighbourhood by bad weather the *Challenger* leaves Barmouth finally on May 19th, at one p.m., and about four in the afternoon runs into the mouth of the Towyn river. Here the shore was composed of sand and shingle, and tolerably flat, so that it was possible to tow. In the afternoon of May 20th, the crew row into Cardigan, and find a strong tide against them between the mainland and the island. Next day they have a hard pull round Dinas Head, and find the rock scenery bold and grand. They row into Fishguard and leave towards midnight in the dark, pulling through a chopping sea without wind. In this way they pass Strumble Head at half-past one in the morning. After a glorious sunrise they reach St. David's Head.

"Salt sprays deluge it, wild waves buffet it, hurricanes rave;
Summer and winter the depths of the ocean girdle it round:
In leaden dawns, in golden noontides, in silvery moonlight,
Never it ceases to hear the old sea's mystical sound.
Surges vex it evermore,
By grey cave and sounding shore."

Mr. Richardson gave a stirring description of the headland, which the reader may thank me for quoting in his own words:—

"'Too late for the tide,' said the pilot, 'the race has begun. And it was running in earnest. We lay on our oars for a few minutes to get breath previous to having a dash at it. It was a splendid sight; the rocks towering over our heads in the wildest and most rugged forms; vessels coming through with

[1] Lewes Morris: "Songs of Two Worlds.—St. David's Head."

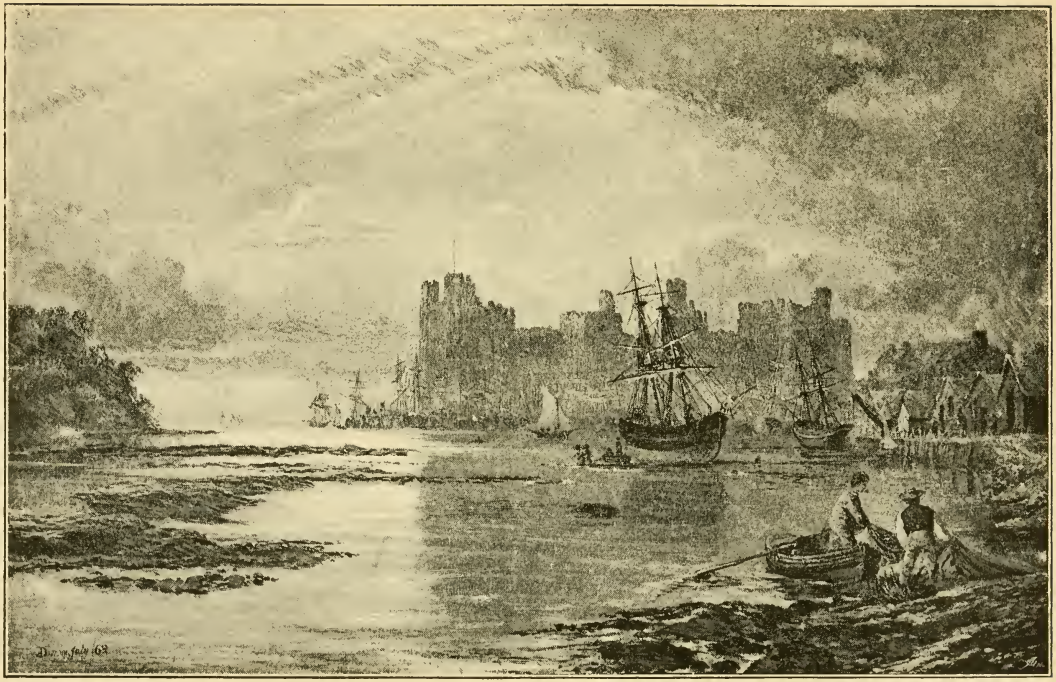
the tide, rolling and plunging, the seas going clean over some of the smaller ones, and the water spouting out of their scuppers as if in a heavy gale, although there was not a breath of wind. 'Now for it!' exclaimed all hands; 'you steer, pilot, and keep us within oar's length of the rocks.' A few strokes and we were fairly into it; the tide caught her bow and canted her head off into the overfalls. (At this point of the narrative the pilot loses his wits, looking behind him and expecting to be pooped, so the captain replaces him.) The captain kept her steady, and we soon shot into the smooth water of Whitesand Bay, where we anchored amidst an amphitheatre of towering rocks and precipitous headlands, thrown in mixed, confused, and chaotic masses, grand and beautiful. As we lay thus moored to the rocks we observed with surprise the beautiful blue colour and pellucid character of the water, so clear that small fish swimming, and shells, and small crabs crawling, could be easily discerned at a great depth, whilst a few hundreds yards off, in the Sound, the race was running, boiling, and roaring with inconceivable violence."

Being now safely moored to the rock, the crew of the *Challenger* enjoyed a quiet sleep in their rugs, and afterwards pulled round Horn Point into St. Bride's Bay, and sailed across it with a light breeze. In Broad Sound they encountered very wild water, and a strong head-wind, but had the tide in their favour till they saw the two lighthouses on St. Anne's Head, when it turned against them, and they rounded the point laboriously at the oars, landing in Milford Haven at eight in the evening, in the Cove of Dale, utterly exhausted.

This is the right way to see a coast, but it requires a lifeboat, and some hardihood. Yachts and steamers keep at a respectful distance from shores of this only too picturesque quality. Our voyagers had evidently an eye for the picturesque, but they were practically more concerned with tide-races. Mr. Richardson just mentions Harlech, which by the

dignity of its situation and the imposing grandeur of its ruins has attracted many a landscape painter. The contrast between the castles of Harlech and Caernarvon is that each has what the other lacks. Harlech is a simpler and smaller building than Caernarvon, but it has a magnificent situation, whilst that of Caernarvon is low, and only gains some advantage by being near water and shipping, and by its hilly distances, including the Snowdon range.

The Castle at Caernarvon is one of the grandest in the world, with its thirteen polygonal towers and its numerous turrets scattered over a vast irregular site and connected by massive and lofty walls. The irregularity of the architectural arrangement gives a charming variety to the views. This castle is not quite so sternly simple as some other great feudal fortresses. There are traceried windows in the state apartments, and there is a little sculpture, if only the damaged eagles on the Eagle Tower, and the canopied statue of Edward I. over the great entrance. The architecture is not, however, in itself very various, and it seems to want the dominant feature of a great central keep, which is so conspicuous a merit in Windsor. The prevailing idea at Caernarvon is the repetition of the polygonal tower, as at Beaumaris and Conway it is the repetition of the round tower. At Beaumaris there are ten round towers in the outer defences and ten for the inner, besides four that flank the gateways. Beaumaris has no advantage of situation, except that its meadows are beautiful, and so are the views from them across the widening Beaumaris



Caernarvon Castle. By Alfred Dawson.

Bay with Penmaenmawr in the distance. Conway, on the other hand, is magnificently situated, and has eight round towers of a more imposing size than those of Beaumaris. One of them was cut away for half its lower circumference by the railway engineers, but as the upper half still remained suspended in air, like a corbel, they left it. These magnificent old castles would be pleasanter objects of contemplation if they had been erected in defence of liberty rather than as instruments of oppression. Penrhyn Castle is interesting as a modern experiment in Norman baronial architecture. It is a long time since I saw it, but I well remember the impression produced by its hugeness and the gloom of the grave Norman keep with its walls of dark Mona marble. It is strange that so grave and military a style should have been chosen for a modern habitation, but Penrhyn, in an age of revivals, was a more successful attempt than the false and meagre Gothic of Eaton Hall, which the present owner has wisely concealed or demolished.

The Menai Strait is the prettiest little channel anywhere amongst the British Islands. It is rather longer than Windermere, and would present exactly the appearance of a narrow lake were it not that the tide often changes the lake into a rapid river.[1] The shores being very rich in wood, and rocky in some parts, with mountainous distances, compose delightful

[1] If I may trust the authorities before me, the speed of the tide in the Menai Strait must be, at times, considerably greater than that of the Rhone between Lyons and Avignon.

landscapes, which are not spoiled by the two wonderful bridges. The Telford Suspension Bridge is a model of elegance, certainly one of the most graceful suspension bridges in the world. Stephenson's tubular structure, the Britannia, is sternly simple, but it is not ugly. Considered as architecture, it is but a return to the primitive construction with the beam on pillars, before the invention of the arch. The towers were judiciously designed so as to break the long line of tube. At the time of its construction everybody believed that tubular bridges would be generally adopted, but they have not been, and now that the cantilever principle is triumphant on the Forth, and proposed for the Channel, they are, in fact, superseded.

It appears from a letter from Lord Clarendon that towards the close of the seventeenth century travellers from Conway to Beaumaris passed over Penmaenmawr. Lady Clarendon was in a litter, and the rest of the company on horseback, except that his lordship walked. As for his coach, it was to have been taken off its wheels and carried over the mountain by sheer strength of human arms. However, it was drawn over the hill by horses, tandem fashion, with three or four men behind "that it might not slip back," and this was a great innovation. The servants and horses were ferried over in little round sea-boats. In Anglesea Lady Clarendon is put into the litter again, "for never was or can come a coach into that part of the country."

The Road under Penmaenmawr. From a drawing by David Cox.

Anglesea is not one of the ideal islands. It is not sufficiently detached from the mainland, and its hills, such as they are, do not give it a decided unity like those of the small mountainous islands. Murray says that "the west coast of Anglesea, which is seldom or never visited, contains coast scenery of a high order."

Between Anglesea and the river Dee there is some of the grandest coast scenery in Great Britain. I do not remember any sea-cliff, even on the west coast of Scotland, that produces a more overpowering effect than the mass of limestone called "Great Orme's Head." The steamers from Liverpool to Beaumaris pass, as it seems, almost close under it, so that travellers by water enjoy its full magnificence, and have the pleasure of looking at a very dangerous place from a position of safety. Mr. Richardson mentions the wreck of the brig *Ormsby*, that went ashore here in the dark: one man was stowing the jib, not usually a safe occupation in a storm, yet it proved so in his case, for when the vessel struck he dropped off the bowsprit on a ledge of rock, and was the only man saved. Mr. Richardson adds:— "Lifeboats of little or no service here with the wind dead on; difficult to say what would be of service, as the cliff rises nearly perpendicular. Here the tide met us running like a sluice; the evening closing in and getting very dark, our position was by no means pleasant." They pulled out to sea and got a breeze.

The shipwreck of "Lycidas" took place some-

where near the mouth of the Dee. Milton's "learned friend was unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637." Turner appears to have misunderstood a passage towards the close of the poem in which Milton thinks of the body as possibly washed away as far as the Hebrides in one direction, or the "guarded mount" in the other. Turner makes the shipwreck of "Lycidas" occur close under St. Michael's Mount.

The fine estuary of the Dee looks very important on the map, but the commercial value of it is as nothing in comparison with the narrower Mersey. The antiquarian and artistic interest belonging to it are connected mainly with Flint Castle and the curious old city of Chester. Our reproduction of Girtin's drawing will give some idea of the castle as it was more than ninety years ago. Forty-six years after Girtin's premature death, a considerable part of Flint Castle fell, in consequence of having been slowly undermined by the sea. The citadel of Flint Castle is round, and is called the Double Tower, because there are two walls, a larger and a lesser circle. I have not seen Chester for more than thirty years, but when I visited the place it was as good as old Rouen for the preservation of mediæval houses, though on a less important scale. I remember especially the long and broad galleries of oak which made it possible to walk a considerable distance on the level of the first floors. Liverpool I know much better, having been there frequently, the last time in

Flint Castle. From a drawing by T. Girtin.

1882. The impression it gave me then was that of a place now very truly and completely representative of everything that is best in Lancashire except its scenery, and except, of course, that rural life which still survives in some parts in spite of manufactures. The Mersey did not seem to be greatly changed, except that the docks and sheds were more extensive, and the shipping on a still more important scale. I visited one of the vessels of the White Star Line, the *Celtic*, and examined all the wonderfully ingenious arrangements by which a dense population of emigrants and richer people are conveyed across the Atlantic in tolerable decency and comfort. The most obvious qualities of the ship were her size, space, cleanliness, and orderly subdivision; but I was more surprised by the extreme promptitude with which, by the discipline of long practice and incessant improvements, a vessel of that importance could be discharged and reladen, so that she lost a minimum of time between her trips. An engineer told me that he had visited many interesting places, but without seeing them, as during the short rest of the engines in port they had to be thoroughly cleaned and examined. The workers must look upon the passengers as enviable idlers, but the passengers for the most part are either sick or dull, and only want to be put ashore. The modern contest with distance has never been better exemplified than in these swift vessels, terrible consumers of coal, that are always rushing across the Atlantic without a pause, but never without danger.

Liverpool left a mixed impression on my mind; the brownish-yellowish waters of the Mersey were, as it happened, agitated by a strong breeze as the ferry-boats plied on them rapidly under a dull sky, and the steamers went out to sea, leaving the smoke of Liverpool behind them for the bleak and grey expanse, the unquiet plain, that stretches thence to Ireland. Liverpool, itself, seemed more gloomy than I remembered it of yore, but a finer city, with increasing magnificence of architecture. It is difficult for English towns, with all their wealth, to make themselves charming or beautiful—the climate and the smoke forbid it—but they may be grand, and that Liverpool certainly has now become. It may seem strange that so practical a place should be the home of Rossetti's most poetical picture, *Dante's Dream;* yet if men are to feel the ennobling influence of imaginative art, it must be made accessible to them in great cities. The Walker Gallery is a fine institution, which has a great future before it. I had not time to visit any private collections. With regard to a more practical matter, the Manchester Ship Canal, I was told by a civil engineer that it was a wild scheme that could never be realized: an opinion then prevalent in Liverpool. It seems, however, at the present day, rather more hopeful than Panama. The reader will not require me to attempt a description of the enormous Liverpool docks. He knows what a dock is, and what to expect when there are forty miles of quay.

The Lancashire coast above Liverpool is flat and

Off the Mersey: Atlantic Steamer picking up a Pilot. From a drawing by J. R. Wells.

uninteresting from the sea, the chief variety of it being in the prosperous villages. Southport, situated just opposite to Lytham, on the south side of the estuary of the Ribble, has grown into a watering-place of much importance, having a reputation for a mild climate. Southport, Lytham, and Blackpool, the three principal watering-places of Lancashire, have changed so much since I knew them, that it is useless for me to describe them. They have lost the charm of obscure little places to gain the advantages, with the drawbacks, of celebrity, and they have long since passed out of that primitive condition most appreciated by artists. From Lytham northwards, the coast becomes more interesting as it rises in cliffs, not comparable, however, to those on the coast of Wales. The sea comes in grandly at Blackpool when the west wind is strong, as the width from there to Ireland is about a hundred and thirty miles. I remember seeing the Isle of Man from Blackpool, its mountains pale but distinct in the clear air across sixty miles of sea. My recollection of Fleetwood is that of a new port, just struggling into existence. Like Milford, it owes its origin to the foresight of a single landowner.

Fleetwood is not, even yet, very important or attractive, but for us it has a peculiar interest, as that point of the western English coast where it first becomes northern in character, at least in the distant views. From Fleetwood one can see across the dozen miles' width of Morecambe Bay to the Cumberland Hills; to my eyes a most refreshing

and exhilarating sight, especially after the muggy distances of South Lancashire, where the genuine mountain blue is a colour utterly unknown. It is probable that the existence of THE PORTFOLIO once depended upon an incident on the shore of Morecambe Bay. I had ridden on horseback to Lancaster, and wished to ride across the sands. A man in Lancaster asked if my horse was to be trusted. I said he was strong, but liable to fits of sullen obstinacy, and the man dissuaded me from the attempt. It so happened that my beast had one of his worst fits of obstinacy that day, but in a safer place than the middle of Lancaster sands. Many a man and horse have been drowned there, from a preference (on the man's part) of the segment to the arc.

After Morecambe Bay comes the entrance to Wordsworth's River Duddon, and then the shore of Cumberland up into the Solway. The Cumberland mountains are seen as distances from the sea, but they are not so near the coast as Cader Idris. Those about Wast Water are as near the sea as Snowdon. Even the distant sight of them is full of pleasant suggestion, as we know that the beautiful lakes are nestling in their hollows.

The reader will, perhaps, excuse me if I do not attempt a description of Ireland and the Isle of Man. My way of describing places is simply to give my own impressions of them, with an occasional reference to geography when it clears up such a matter as the width of a lake or a bay. I have *seen* Ireland

and the Isle of Man several times, but have never landed on either of them. What I saw was nothing but hills across a few miles of water, so that these islands remain for me as indefinite as the "Kingdom by the sea," in Poe's poem of "Annabel Lee." As all true poets are aware, there is a poetical value even in this very vagueness, and my Ireland, with purple hills mingling with the clouds of sunset, beyond troubled waters rolling far and wide, is in some ways grander for me than the rather too much detailed Ireland of my daily newspaper. I will go no further into politics than to express a sentimental regret that the second Earl of Derby, in 1504, relinquished the title of King of Man. One of his successors approved of his resignation, on the ground that the island would not maintain its independence against other nations, and that it was "not fitting for a king to be subject to any other king but the King of kings," a principle not much respected in the present German Empire. My regret is purely sentimental and poetical. The central island of the British dominions is neither an English nor an Irish country, it is not a part of Scotland—it is truly a little nation, with a language and even a local parliament, and some coinage of its own. The retention of a kingly title would have marked this nationality, and there would have been little danger to the "adjacent island of Great Britain" from the fleets of his Manx Majesty.

CHAPTER VII

THE WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND.

It may almost be said that Scotland has two western coasts, which may be roughly described as an inner and an outer. The inner is sheltered by an almost continuous line of islands. Thanks to the Crinan Canal,[1] which divides the neck of the peninsula of Cantyre, the tourist may make his way from Greenock (which, rather than Glasgow, is practically the point of departure) to Tobermory, in Mull, without feeling the force of the Atlantic waves, though now and then, if the wind sets in a particular direction, he will get some idea of what they can be and do. Tobermory past, the shelter ceases, or becomes very slight indeed, till Skye is reached. Skye, sheltered itself by the line of the Outer Hebrides, protects the channel between it and the mainland. The winds indeed, come down from the hills on either side with terrific force, but the waves have no space to rise. North of Skye

[1] The Crinan Canal was constructed for the benefit of the fishing and coasting trade of the Western Highlands in the years 1793—1801.

comes the broad channel of the Minch. Of this the north wind is the master,

> "To raise or still
> The angry billows at his will."

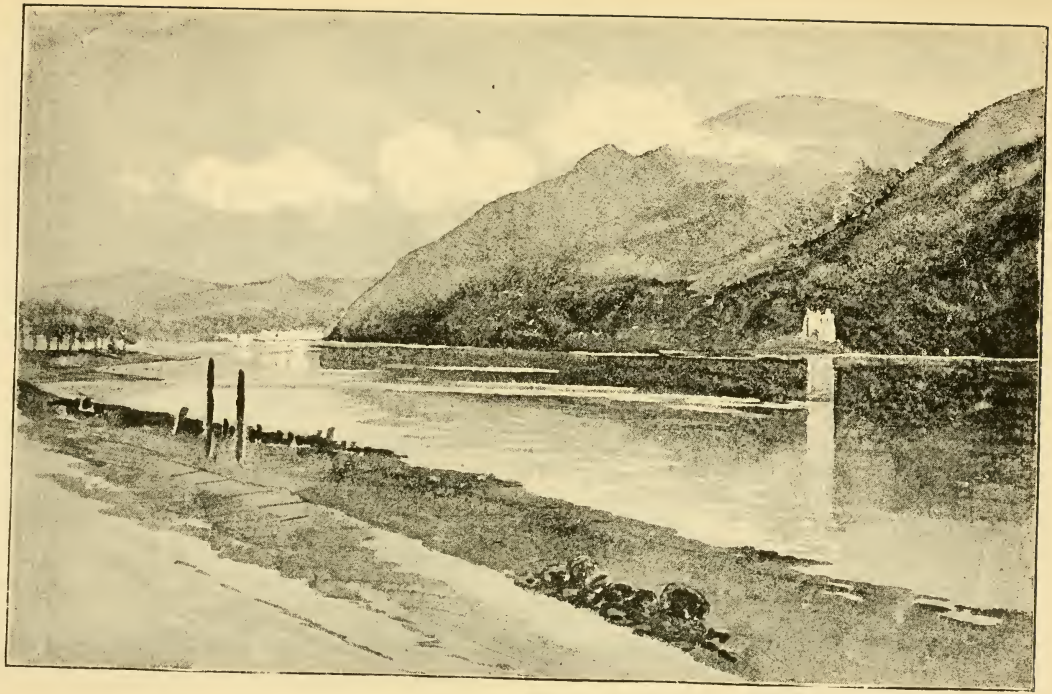
And very angry they can be; for they come, not with the majestic roll of the Atlantic waves, but with a shorter and more "choppy" motion, not unlike that of the English Channel, acknowledged to be the deadliest of all seas that are. Both routes have singular, though different, attractions. Following the one, we watch, through an endless variety of scenes, how the sea, to use the graphic words of Tacitus—words suggested, we may easily believe, by personal observation—"makes many a deep inlet and circling sweep, and thrusts itself into the midst of hills and mountains as if into its own domain." If we are venturesome enough to take the other, we have the spectacle of the Atlantic breaking on the coast with a grandeur of which, monotonous as it may be, one never wearies. Of both routes I shall have something to say.

The two water-ways divide at the southern end of the island of Bute. If we elect to follow the inner line we travel almost due north, and before long find ourselves in the famous waters of Loch Fyne. No classic sea, or stream, or lake, has achieved the reputation which has been given to Loch Fyne by its herrings. Some speciality of flavour, as indefinable as such specialities mostly are, and often, we may believe, the creature of imagination, is said to distinguish them. The fisheries of the

loch itself are not what they were. Experts say that the shoals are now rather to be found in the open seas than in these land-locked waters, where, indeed, the pursuit is urged more incessantly and with deadlier effect, but the name survives in full force, and probably will survive, even should the reality cease.

Loch Fyne is one of the largest of the Scottish "fiords." From the point where the rivulet from which it takes, or with which it shares, its name, to that where it merges in the Sound of Bute, it has a length of more than forty miles. Not far from its head waters on its western shore is Inverary, the famous seat of the Maccallum More, now represented by the ducal house of Argyll. The loftiest mountains it can boast are Ben-an-Lochain (2955 feet) and Ben Bheula (2557), and it must yield the palm for grandeur to some of its more northern rivals; but it is often very beautiful, especially where, as among the woods of Inverary, nature has felt the improving hand of man. The southern end, where the heights of Arran rise directly in front of the spectator and Bute can be seen on his left hand, is perhaps the finest piece of scenery that it can show. Mr. Pennell's sketch is taken from a point looking towards Inverary.

We will now turn for awhile to the outer route. To follow this we must sail almost due south till Arran, which has been lying on our right hand, is passed, and then turn in a westerly direction, but with still a slight leaning to the south. So we reach in



Loch Fyne. From a drawing by J. Pennell.

due time the "Mull," or headland which terminates the remarkable peninsula of Cantyre. As we round this we experience the full force of the Atlantic waves. Even on a windless day the long swell comes rolling in from three thousand miles of ocean, for there is nothing here between us and the Labrador coast. And when the wind blows, as it does blow with a quite remarkable frequency, from the west, there is a scene of magnificent turmoil. The waves dash wildly on the rocks, broken already into countless shapes by the storms of centuries, sweeping far up the height of the cliff, and sending showers of spray a long way over it. When we turn our eyes away from this ever-changing spectacle, we see, some dozen miles to the south-west, the dim outlines of the Irish coast.[1]

No other land is in view, for it is only on the clearest day that we can possibly catch a glimpse of Islay, and this hardly from the Mull itself. But if we land and climb Knockmoss (the Hill of the Plain), we can see to the west and north Islay and Jura, and sometimes even, but this is very rare, the distant mountains of Mull, while the hills of Arran rise to the east, and Ailsa Craig is dimly seen on the horizon.

There is scarcely a quieter region than Cantyre, or one less touched with the stir and change of modern times. It lies out of the range of the tourist,

[1] The nearest point of Ireland is Turpoint, in the county of Antrim. The exact distance between this and the Mull s eleven miles and a half.

and so keeps undisturbed its primitive ways of life and thought. In earlier times it had a very stirring and even tragic history. At Saddle Castle, on the eastern coast, the Bruce was entertained by Angus Macdonald, Lord of Cantyre, who afterwards did good service for him on the right wing of the Scottish army at Bannockburn. Three centuries later the Macdonalds had to fight for their land and lives against their neighbours and rivals, the Argyll Campbells. They were driven from Cantyre in the early part of the seventeenth century, but recovered it again after Montrose's victory at Inverlochy. Montrose's brief career of victory—it lasted scarcely eight months—came to an end at Philiphaugh, and two years afterwards Cantyre was the only place that held out against the party of the Covenant. In July, 1647, their last refuge, Dunaverty Castle, was compelled to surrender. All the garrison were massacred, but one young Macdonald, an infant at the breast, son of Archibald Og of Sanda (a little island which the traveller passes on his way to the Mull), was saved by his nurse.

Our course now lies through the Sound of Islay, with Islay on the one hand—an island ranking fourth in size among the Hebrides, and famous for its manufacture of whiskey—and the bolder heights of Jura on the other. We leave some way on the right Coryvrechan, [2] the Maelstrom of these coasts,

[2] At full length "Corry-vreachan,' or Caldron of Breachkan. Breachkan, according to the legend, was a Norwegian prince who sued for the hand of a princess of the Isles. Her father consented, if Breachkan would anchor his vessel for three days

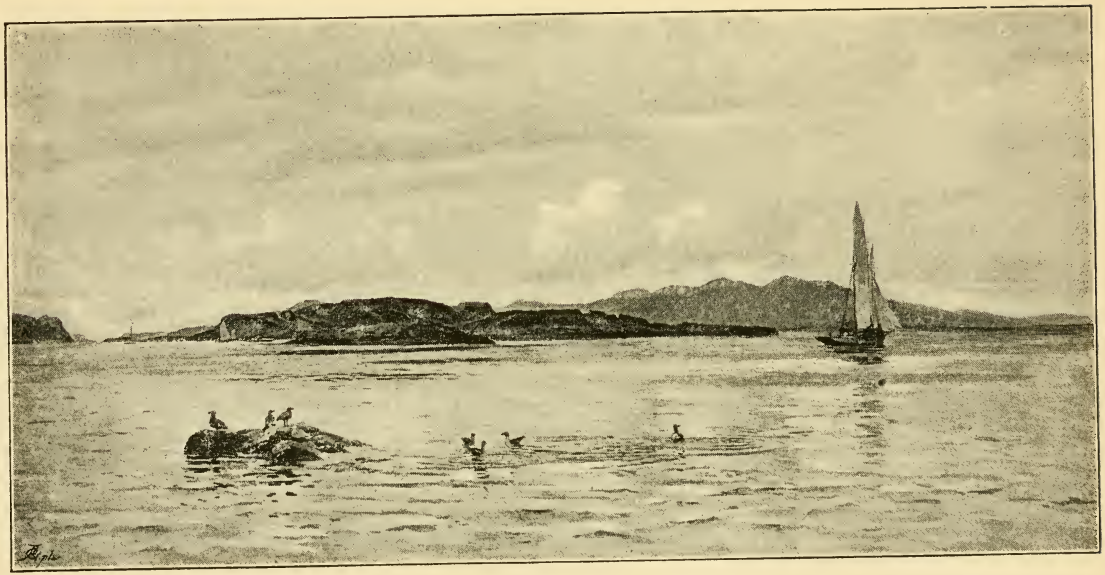
the terrors of which are even more the creatures of imagination than those of the Norwegian whirlpool, and on the left Colonsay, with its satellite of Oronsay. Were we to follow the route of the open sea, we should come to Iona (Icolmkill) and, some ten miles further to the north, to Staffa. Both these islands lie to the westward of Mull. But the track of the steamers lies on the eastern side of that island, and the steamers are, with the exception of a few yachts and fishing boats, almost the only frequenters of these seas. Beautiful as these waters are with a manifold beauty, they do not offer to those who would traverse them the inducements either of safety or of gain. The great routes of commerce are far away, and the shore is one of those which the sailor loves best when he sees it least.

The next spot at which I will ask my readers to halt is Oban, which we reach by a channel which bears the name of the "Firth of Lorn," a name full of historical associations. Oban is quite of the present. No spot in the Western Highlands is better known or more frequented. Daily, for some months in the year, the double stream of travellers flows northward and southward through it. This constant stream has left little that is characteristic

in the whirlpool. The prince, instructed by the wise men, procured three cables, one of hemp, one of wool, and one of woman's hair. The first day the hempen cable broke, the cable of wool on the second ; the hair would have held out, but that one lock that had been woven into it came from the head of a faithless fair; and Breachkan was drowned.

in the town itself. The English have conquered it as they have conquered Boulogne. But there is little change even in the immediate neighbourhood. This island of Kerrera, for instance, protecting the bay of Oban from the westerly winds, in which Mr. Colin Hunter has found a subject, is probably little different in aspect from what it was some six centuries and a half ago, when Alexander II. of Scotland died there. Possibly these gulls that are seen in the foreground are vexed somewhat by the idle sport by which the Englishman gratifies the national passion for slaughter; but they are the descendants of tribes which have dwelt on these rocks for more centuries than one can count. Here, in this almost nameless island, we find, as so often in these regions, places that are now, so to speak, left high and dry, but were once in the full stream of history. This rugged little Kerrera, for instance, reminds us of all the interesting story of the rise and fall of the Norse dominion in the Western Isles. It was the business of asserting the supremacy of the Scottish throne that brought Alexander and his fleet to these parts. Angus of Argyll, we are told, had been wont to do homage for certain islands to the King of Norway. Alexander claimed that this homage should be done to himself, and, on Angus refusing to obey, gathered a force to compel him, and, being seized with fever, died on Kerrera, at a place still called, it is said, Dalree, or "the King's Field."

Straight before us as we leave Oban, lies the island



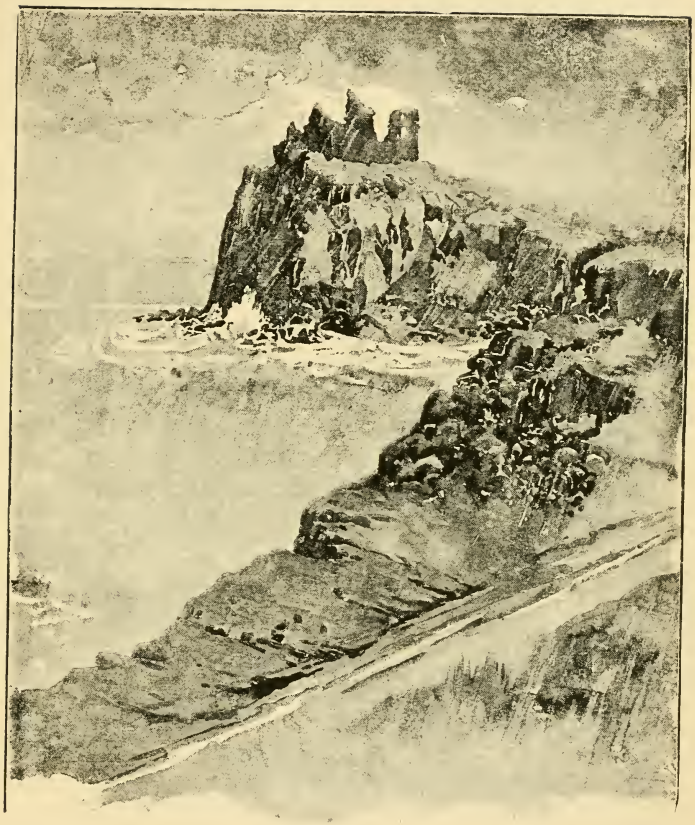
The Morning Breeze. Island of Kerrera, Mull Hills in the Distance. From a picture by Colin Hunter, A.R.A.

of Lismore, the "Great Garden," at the entrance to Loch Linnhe. This beautiful fiord runs inland, if we reckon as one with it what is commonly known as Lower Loch Eil, for a distance of more than thirty miles. If we penetrate to its higher end we shall find ourselves at the south-western end of the Caledonian Canal, the useful work by which the Glen-More-nan-Albin (the great valley of Scotland), between the North Sea and the Atlantic, has been made a practicable route for vessels of moderate size.[1] But this would take us too far away from our route. Lower down we may see on either hand a region famous in story. On the right hand—I am supposing that our faces are turned landwards—is Appin, familiar to us from that admirable story, the best, surely, of all that have been written on the subject of the Jacobite wars, Mr. R. L. Stevenson's "Kidnapped." On our left rise, with a somewhat bleak aspect, the hills of Morven. The name suggests the legendary heroes of Scottish story—Fingal, the king; and Ossian, warrior and poet; and Oscar, the short-lived Achilles of the North. Whether these were real men, who knows? Who can say whether Hector, or Achilles, or Ajax, or Æneas ever lived in the flesh? But that they were genuine in the literary sense there can be very little doubt. Macpherson, of course, travestied them, and made them as little like their real selves, the weird

[1] The Caledonian Canal is sixty-two miles in length, forty passing through natural lakes (Loch Lochy, Loch Oich, and Loch Ness), and twenty-two having been cut.

creatures of the old Celtic imagination, as "carpenter's gothic" is like Wells Cathedral. But that they had a true poetical existence ages before Macpherson was heard of is most certainly true. Whether these heroic personages, or such dim prototypes as they may have had, had any special connection with this Argyleshire Morven is more doubtful. Morven, according to one etymology, for which, however, I do not venture to vouch, is simply More-Earrain, the "mainland."

I hope that the seals which Mr. Colin Hunter has put in the foreground of his picture, will never become as mythical as Ossian's heroes. They are certainly rarer in these parts than they were some years ago; in fact, they have many enemies. Their hides are valuable, not as fur, it must be understood (for the "fur seal" is never found on the British coasts), but as leather, and so is the oil yielded by their fat. Salmon-fishers, too, whether they seek profit with the net or sport with the rod, have a grudge against the creature, and it must be confessed that he has a way of haunting the mouths of streams, and catches not a few fish while they are waiting in the sea for a freshet or spate (*Anglice*, a flood) which will enable them to seek their wonted breeding-places in the upper waters. It must go hard with any creature against whom the greed of gain and the still more cruel jealousy of sport combine to make war. The larger dwellers in the sea, however, are not yet wholly banished from these waters. Sometimes the inhabitants of one of



Duntulm Castle, Isle of Skye. From a drawing by J. Pennell.

the remoter islands are delighted and enriched by the capture of a "school" of bottle-nosed whales. Sometimes the traveller catches sight, as I myself have done in former years, of the huge Greenland whale, showing its vast bulk of seventy feet or more in some of these sounds or channels. Eighteen centuries ago it was known as the "British" whale, and though it is now a rare visitor to our seas, it has not wholly deserted them.

We will now leave Loch Linnhe behind us, thread the Sound of Mull, and passing Tobermory, nestling among its verdure, venture to round "Ardramurchan's Point." The shelter of Mull failing us, we meet again the full strength of the Atlantic waves, and nowhere do they seem more formidable. As the steamer emerges from the Sound, she has to steer so close to the shore that, to use a common phrase, we could "throw a biscuit on to the rocks." Let a crank or a piston give way, and we should be dashed to atoms on that inhospitable coast.

Half an hour's sail or so brings us to the southernmost of those three strangely-named islands—Muck, Eigg, and Rum, the "Small Isles," as they are collectively called. One of these has acquired an evil fame, by the well-known tragedy of the Cave of Eigg. In this cave, some three hundred and fifty years ago, the inhabitants of the island, a haunt of the Clan Macdonald, took refuge from an invasion of the Macleods of Skye. Some footsteps in the snow discovered their retreat. The Macleods lit great fires at the mouth of the cave and suffocated all the

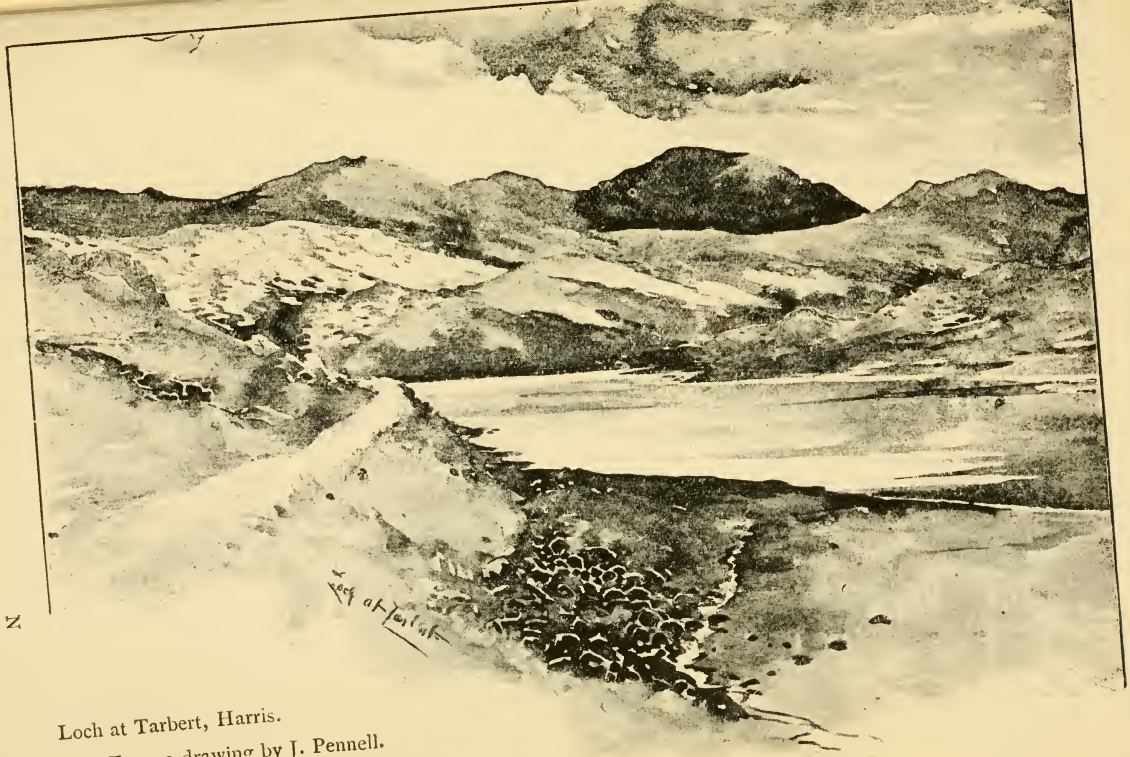
fugitives. The bones of the victims were to be seen less than a hundred years ago. The sight of the islands always has reminded me of a story told by Hugh Miller of the trouble that followed the disruption of the Scottish Church. The landowners in many parts were unwilling to sell sites for the new manses, and the Free Church minister of Small Isles had to reside in a yacht. In fair weather this may have been well enough, but as there is no safe anchorage in any one of the islands, whenever it came on to blow he had to put out to sea.

Skye we must pass hurriedly by, though there is much to keep us in its scenery, scarcely surpassed elsewhere for variety of charm, ranging as it does between the soft woodland beauty of Armadale, the seat of Lord Macdonald, who claims to represent the ancient Lords of the Isles, and the desolate grandeur of Loch Corruisk. Sir Walter Scott's words, often as they have been quoted before, may be given once again :—

"Stranger, if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed
By lake and cataract her lonely throne,
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain-height,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake and with the mourning sky.

* * * * * * *

"Such are the scenes where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Bannoch's lakes,
In Dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise :
Or further, where beneath the northern skies



Loch at Tarbert, Harris.

From a drawing by J. Pennell.

Chides wild Loch Eribol his caverns hoar—
But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar."

Scarcely less wild and desolate than Corruisk is Duntulm Castle on the western coast of the island, of which Mr. Pennell gives us a picture. It was once the seat of the Lords of the Isles. The story is that they were driven from it by a ghost. Duntulm is a ruin, but another castle—Dunvegan—the seat of the Macleods, is still inhabited.

The rugged Skye mountains, with their almost fantastic shapes, bearing traces, we are told, of volcanic origin, should be particularly noted. Their special character is continued in the scenery of the next land that we reach, Harris, separated from Skye by the Sound of Harris, a channel some twelve miles broad. Harris, it must be understood, forms one island with its northern neighbour, Lewis, or The Lews; but its scenery is wholly different—a difference represented, curiously enough, by the fact of its belonging to a different county.[1] Tarbert, which Mr. Pennell has chosen as the subject of one of his illustrations, is one of the many Tarbets, scattered over West Scotland. It is the "isthmus," which divides from each other the Atlantic and the Channel of the Minch. Southern Lewis resembles somewhat the bordering region, for its hills are lofty and bold. But the character of the island quickly changes. The mountains give place to long sweeps of moorland, interspersed with innumerable

[1] Harris is in Inverness-shire, Lewis in Ross-shire.

lakes. The height of the hills constantly diminishes as we go farther north, till, north of Stornoway, the country becomes almost level. The coast-line, however, continues to have a certain picturesqueness, and the northern promontory of the Lewis, or Butt of Lewis, is a noble-looking rock.

Lewis, though it has little to attract the casual visitor, is an interesting island. It is the largest and most populous of the dependent islands of the British group, and its social condition offers one of the most perplexing of problems. Its population far exceeds its means of support, even when these are supplemented with the earnings of the herring fishery. Every rood of available ground has been utilized, and yet the population continues to increase, while it almost refuses to emigrate. I sometimes think that it presents an epitome of what the world will be some thousand years hence—it may be less.[1]

But these are too grave matters for the present occasion, and would certainly keep my readers too long. Before I part with them I would mention the two sights of the island—Callernish, with its so-

[1] The economic history of the island is curious. Some fifty years ago Sir James Matheson bought it of the old proprietors, the Mackenzies of Seaforth. He laid out a vast sum of money on it, after spending at least 30,000*l.* in the first year of his ownership in feeding the people. Moor was reclaimed, only to fall back into original barrenness, and lochs drained, only to add a few more acres of stone and peat to a region which had already more than enough. And now the people for whom all this money has been spent are so hostile to the proprietor (Sir James's widow) that she has been forced to leave the island.

called Druid Circle, inferior only to Stonehenge of all that are known in the British Islands, and the Sands of Uig, a little bay on the western coast, immortalized by Mr. Black in his "Princess of Thule." The "Princess" the traveller will hardly find, though there are many local claimants to the title; but the sands, with the green hills about them and the blue sea in the distance, are there in unalterable beauty.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NORTHERN SHORES.

Sutherlandshire—Cape Wrath—Pentland Firth—Orkney and Shetland Isles—Noss Head—Wick—Herring fishing—Cromarty and Moray Firths—East Coast from Peterhead to East Neuk of Fife.

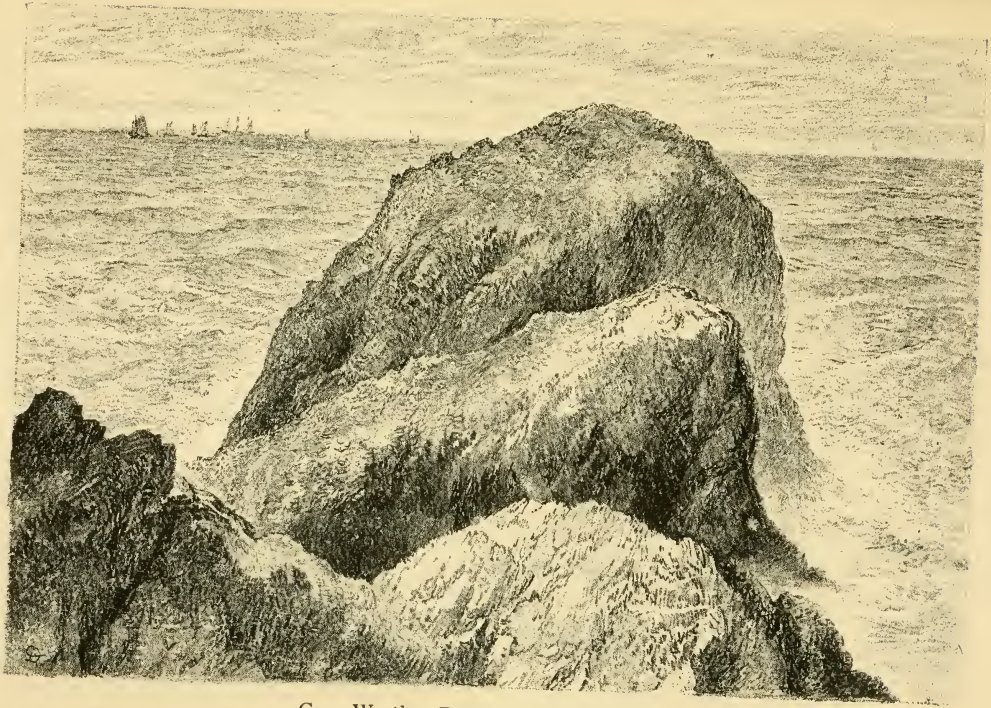
In the British Isles no coast is so grandly picturesque, so full of weird and massive rock scenery, as that which faces the great northern seas. The northern coast forms a majestic and appropriate rampart to a great island, as if Nature herself, with a due appreciation of the value of what she has in charge, had piled her cliff-towers and fashioned her buttressed munitions of rocks so as effectually to drive back the most furious onslaughts of her fiercest seas. To pass from the graceful charms of the western isles and the western shores to the rugged shores of the North is to enter a new and sterner world. Both nature and man are engaged in an almost perpetual warfare. The stress of the sea prevails over all. The whole lives of the people are devoted to an endless struggle with the deep for their very existence, and harbours have been forced by art where denied by nature. And yet elements of softer beauty and gentler grace are not wanting;

and there are times when the storm-battered and wave-riven cliffs look down with more than monumental calm over as peaceful an expanse of sunlit ocean as ever smiled to summer skies.

In summer the west coast of Sutherlandshire is of great beauty in colour ; the very air idealizes one and lifts one's whole being into happier health. In the bight beneath Storr lies graceful, lovely Lochinver ; further up run Lochs Cairnbawn, Laxford, and Inchard, with seas spreading their arms among the high mountains. On high slopes or on low-lying stretches of fertile land you may notice, as you gently sail along by day, the dots of crofter townships—brown, thatched patches of civilization in the wild wastes, refugees from the madding crowd, with their small boats drawn far up from the reach of the sea, and by night their peeping lights make the coast friendly. The eye wanders over the background of the coast—long noble ranges of picturesque mountains, that make the craggy promontories of Assynt seem afar off. Near Storr the Baddach Stack, with arms and legs, and broad shoulders, and flowing garments, resembles a preacher ; Queenaig's spectral peak, near Kyle-Sku, appears through mists which add to the mysterious vagueness : and in the Kyle you have to be lively to avoid the changing eddies which, ere you know, may smash your boat against the rocks. About the host of creeks, lochs. and mountain-sides what charms of colour ! what sparkling, glowing sunsets ! and, where nature revels in tints and hues that defy the painter's brush or the

penman's skill, what many-coloured and many-shaped clouds are to be seen reflecting the deep rich hues from the lochs, and how luminous is the atmosphere over all! The beauty of the sea and its saline flavour fill one with rapturous health. Here your oars at night lift fire from the sea.

You approach Cape Wrath. How suggestive the name! how terrible its tragic realities! Vessels steering northward with westerly wind and hazy weather are apt to think when they have passed the rocky harbour of Loch Laxford they have rounded the north-western point of Scotland. Cape Wrath springs up from the mainland some six hundred feet high, in great masses of broken rocks, with its light-house warding off mariners from destruction on the cliffs; and although it is the lot of most of us not to see it by day, the ship's convulsive motions afford by night sufficient indication of the force of two meeting and contending seas about this formidable coast. Across this bold precipitous headland, with the Lewis as a speck on the horizon, and the Orkneys breaking the northern line, and the mountainous screens shutting in the south, there breaks the vast continual roar and turmoil of the long range of northern seas, the Minch and the German Ocean by the Pentland Firth (is it not true that in the north all natural voices, including the sound of the sea, are stronger and louder than in the south?), and you feel how Cape Wrath merits its name, and how wisely mariners give it a wide berth, and do not approach land till they reach the Pentland Firth.



Cape Wrath. Drawn by Alfred Dawson.

The mention of the Pentland Firth makes a sailor knit his brow and consider. Here I should be glad to gratify my Rugby canal bargee friend, who confided to me he should like to go to sea in a real herring-boat for a day. What could he make of a swirling, eddying tide from the Western Hebrides, and the Western Ocean, and the North Seas, which at spring tides races at a speed of from four to twelve miles an hour, and with such force that when Her Majesty's Fleet attempted to pass through in teeth of it at Westray all their horse-power engines were of no avail, and they had to turn tail? What would he think of this sea where some, on letting go their anchor, have had to leave it at the bottom? How could he catch the prime lobster there? This, the eastern gulf-stream of the Atlantic (and when storms rage from the south-east, and the tide is running in the wind's eye, boats are lost to view in the hollow of the majestic waves), is of considerable interest, and, as if to add another zest to danger, thick fogs come down, accompanied by calms, and sometimes it has happened that ships have been then carried to Dunnet Bay, while the crew thought themselves becalmed in the Firth! The Pentland Firth is a noble scene. The Orkney Isles close in the north horizon; on the western side of the Hoy rises the thin rock pillar, and above the Old Man of Hoy, the spirit of the storm piercing the air, where the entrances and highway are watched by five light-houses—Noss, the Skerries, Dunnet Head, Holborn Head, and Cape Wrath. From Thurso lies the

way to Holborn Head. North-eastward we have the Bay of Dunnet, with its massive headland, high cliffs, and further east the noble headland of Duncan's Bay and the famous sands of John o'Groats, where the shores are washed by rapid tides from more oceans than one, and the sand-beach, rich in peculiar shells of great beauty and rarity, is of such spotless chalk-like whiteness that it is unequalled except at Tiree in the Outer Hebrides. In favourable weather fleets of ships and boats innumerable pass this great highway from the east and west of our island, the large liners looking like dots from the high cliffs. To hear the terrible voice of the sea here in storm is to carry it in our ears for ever. It is not a place to nurse day-dreaming; one cannot moon about in the presence of great rocks and cliffs, great seas and great views; they all make their presence felt, and keep you wide awake. Here the British Seas, the vast world of great waters, are, whether in calm or in storm, most majestic.

But it is possible to pass even the Pentland Firth without sign of danger. One evening in August I crossed the Firth from Scrabster to Scapa; the sea was calm as a lake, the sultry night fell fast, and made the Orkney Isles, as we with many gliding turns approached, seem like ethereal scenes in dreamland, where lights—humble cottage lights, no doubt—on spectral isles sparkled so kindly, and the islanders' flit-boats, now and again shooting out so unexpectedly and so quietly from projecting points, seemed to row from the

unknown. A message or parcel was delivered, or a passenger stepped down the ship-ladder, and the oarsmen lifted their voices, as they did their oars, gently, and departed peacefully into the midsummer night's drowsy islands; and early on Sunday morning one almost thought he was in Arcady, not in Orkney. One would not have been surprised to have then and there had sight of "Proteus rising from the sea, or heard old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

One thinks at North Ronaldshay of the Armada ship that struck there, and one may trace to this day among the islanders a touch and dash of Spanish blood and beauty, and find in the gorgeous Spanish colours of their knittings the tradition of a warmer clime. About contented, happy Orkney, where all fowls, from statistics, seem to lay eggs, not much need be said: Kirkwall, a smart town, with its solitary tree; Stromness, out of the world, with its houses built endways beyond the water-mark, protected by bulwarks and quays and with doors opening into the sea—some say, to make the art of smuggling easier; Hoy Head, which natives believe to be a profile likeness of Scott—a proof of their vivid imagination and warmth of affection for the author of the "Pirate"; and the Isle of Hoy, with yellow and red cliffs, as if the sun shone on them always, and the flat cultivated fields. Orkney is well-to-do, and makes no claim on your sympathies, nor do the folk on the seas.

From Stromness we sailed in the paddle-steamer,

St. Magnus, which pitched and tossed to a merry tune, and in the early morning crept up, in the midst of dense fog, the west coast of Shetland, so far that the captain thought we had done our journey: he waited till the fog lifted, and when the sun shone later we were just at our destination outside Scalloway, so well do these captains steer. Ultima Thule, Shetland, the land of Udallers, the birthplace of sailors, of superstitious fishermen, a strange, wild land of stacks and skerries, voes and gios, of whales and ponies, of Pictish castles, and caves and sea-trows (mermaids), where men fish and women work, the home of the Aurora Borealis, which carries the gorgeousness of sunset into the night and gives the dawn on the sea an opaline radiance. The sea is the Shetlander's home and provider, and, alas! but too often his grave—the sad home of a sad race. In the wilds of these isles one drinks in the spirit of the sea, and its deep voicefulness fills the air. The sea reigns over all, and asserts its interest or influence over every household, and hardly a cottage but the sea takes toll out of. Treeless, gardenless, fieldless, the salt sea pervades the whole islands, and the dull grey overshadows both folk and land. The weird and the picturesque is the prevailing mark of these hundred odd islands—these Scotlands out of Scotland—so rugged, and irregular as if the sea had torn them asunder. Some of the outlying rocks seem to keep continual watch, and there are the drongs out at sea that are so like fishing-boats with empty sails that

Shaking the Nets. From an etching by Colin Hunter, A.R.A.

we might almost think they were the product of some miraculous process of petrifaction. The coast to the north and north-west surpasses anything in Britain in grandeur. The mighty cliffs of Foula, 1300 feet high—the beautiful pillars and caves of Papa Stour—the contorted fantastic rocks at Hillswick—the Sumburgh Head, with its bare scalp and side to the surge from the Roost—the skerries, arches, and tunnels in every island—the most fantastic shapes and figures of the rocks, the interlacing of lochs with mainland as in friendly grasp; and over all is the great deep blue sea, with patches of vivid green from the shore, and a fringe of brown rocks and dashing foam. Whether they like it or not, the law of nature makes the natives, for love of their lives, know all the sunk reefs and tides as you know your own house; and in their large six'erns (six-oared boats, prow-built at both ends) the waves bound beneath them as horses that know their riders, and the same spirit takes these pensive toilers of the deep yearly to the whale-fishing in winter, or in spring sends them in smacks to Iceland and the Faroe Islands in pursuit of fishing. These islands amid the melancholy main witness the most sublime, raging, terrific storms, when woe betide the boat that is not at home. At the Skerry of Eshaness, with its steep precipices, is a refuge for myriads of kittiwakes, and their shrill cries accord with the wild sea-roar; waves tumble and bellow from the Atlantic on the west or North Sea on the east, like

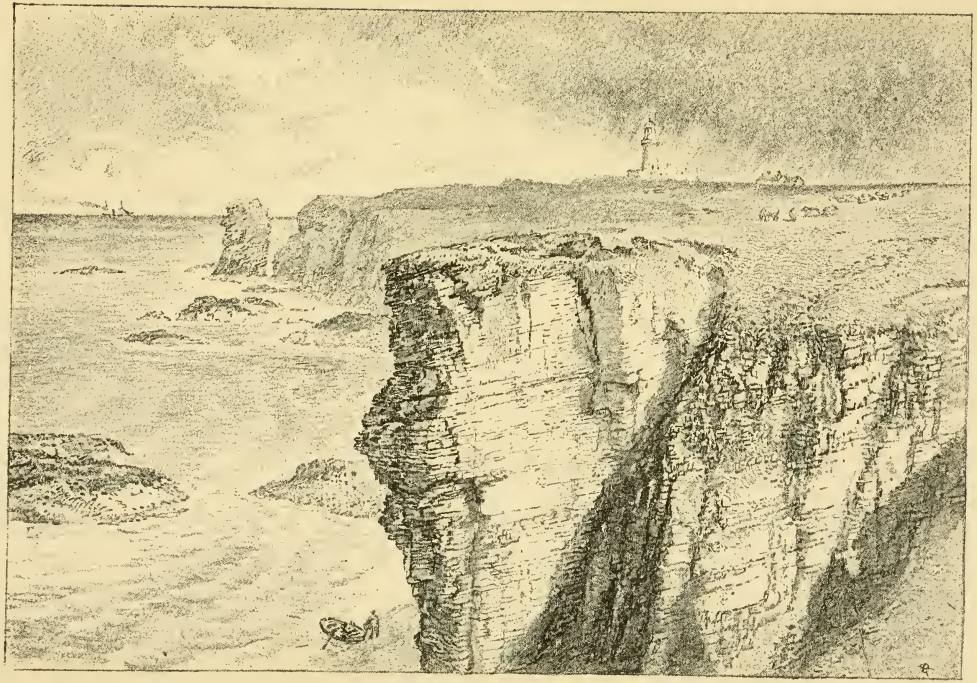
sea-monsters with their manes streaming in the wind, till in the blindness of their rage they dash with great crashes against the trembling rocks, and send their foam-fringed sheets of water so far inland as to keep the country moist and render the springs brackish. The unlimited power of the sea is witnessed at Grind of the Navir, where enormous boulders are tossed ashore, and at Fitful Head (scene of the "Pirate"), where the constant surge escarps the rocks into fantastic cliffs pierced by long twilight caves; and at Muckle Flugga, where the northernmost lighthouse on our seas is, and where the keepers are often imprisoned by stress of weather. Go to Lerwick, with its bay for a natural harbour, and during the fishing season there are boats from all nations and a babel of tongues—Dutch booms and luggers, Swedish boats standing high and well out of the sea, Manx deep-sea boats, Belfast smack-like boats, not to speak of their English and Scottish rivals—all fishing the great northern waters. See the boats leaving Bressay Sound for the sea with an east wind—it is a pretty sight—each boat with its crew pulling out from its fish-curing quarters till they catch the breeze, then up go their fore-sails as they dip and bend to the breeze, up go the jigger-sail and jibs, and away they career like greyhounds round the Sound head; now you see the sails, then the tops, and at last they race out of sight. Here the summer days are nightless. The witching hour of night is replaced in early winter by the brilliancy of the "Merry

Dancers" which spread out in every direction like the evolutions of a great army, whose cohorts are gleaming in more than purple and gold, dispersing now and now combining, and now waning and disappearing, and again rushing into sight with the sound as of hurtling arrows, till at last they slip with mysterious evanescence from the grasp of both eyesight and imagination, and leave behind a sky of brassy yellow and green, into which the sun gradually creeps as an alien presence.

Returning south, passing Fair Isle, looming in the dark between Orkney and Shetland, we sight on the mainland Noss Head, a corner by itself, with its striking blue mass of terribly rugged rocks rising perpendicular out of the sea, tenanted by birds and the lighthouse-keeper guarding the approach. Noss guards the entrance to noble Sinclair's Bay, where bright shining sands are a striking feature. Rocks rise unbroken for miles. A few miles to the north, and off Canisbay, the formidable Merry Men of Mey—so called from the continual exultation of the dancing, leaping waves: though mirth and dancing, says an old author, be far from the minds of the sea when any sea is going. About Duncansbay Head the rock scenery is grand: the brown towering cliffs, some rugged like uncut leaves of a book, others etched in alternate lines of cornice and frieze; and narrow caves, with pillars, aisles, and groined roofs, and wash of sea, making music for ever. Nowhere around the coast do the rocks spring from the sea with such majesty, or so

impressive with strength and splendour. Between Noss and Wick you observe the action of the sea on the cliffs; the wild waves, it is true, make no apparent impression on the solid blue sandstone of Noss, but the little creeks, so numerous along this coast, are gradually widening, and there are everywhere evidences of that gradual encroachment of the sea which time records. One other geological phenomenon: these cliffs, with thousands of ledges, and of isolated stacks with bridge-like connexions—how do you account for their marvellous formation, the beauty of their lines, or for the presence of so many shelves which the Solan goose inhabits? Ailsa Craig and the Bass Rock, the Haddington and Berwick coasts, are other equally fine examples of the action of the vast universal force of marine denudation.

In the deep seas here you may pretty suddenly fall upon the finest sea-sight at night—that is, a great fleet of fishing-boats riding at their nets, with their globe-shaped lights, mast-high, breaking the darkness at curiously regular intervals. Herring-boats are the swallows of the deep, proclaiming summer is at hand, and they speed like the birds over the waves. You pass them as you approach the great fishing coast of Caithness and the harbour of Wick, with its forest of masts, its ancient and fish-like smells, its sea-wealth in the large curing stations. The traffic of the sea from Shetland to here, and for hundreds of miles down the coast, is maintained almost entirely by these homely, smart herring-boats; the clean



Noss Head, near Wick. Drawn by Alfred Dawson.

sailing-boats keep continually crossing—you cannot get out of their sight—and their brown sails and homely rigging and modest decks become likeable, associated as they are with great labouring lives, bold enterprise, sudden risks of rise and fall in markets, hopes and fears of wives and little ones on land, losses from calms and from storms, from failures of fishing and from failures arising from excessive productive fishing. It is spirit-stirring to see the streaming flow of herring-boats, sail after sail in long continuous lines, approaching the harbour from the sea; fresh sails spring up by magic long after you think all have arrived. What a game of pitch-and-toss it is! Some boats you see labouring hard, overladen to danger from a great catch; their neighbours got but little; and on the braes overlooking the harbour the wives stand up against the sky-line, gesticulating and speculating over the boats and catches, and a long way off identifying them by their rigging as they return homewards with their "shots."

The steamer sails from Wick to Aberdeen in the open sea, out of sight of the long stretch of rocky coast to Lybster, where, and at Sarclet and Whaligoe the natural creeks among the giddy height of rocks are utilized as harbours; and these romantic shelters, which served as lurking-places for piratical Vikings and smuggling Norsemen, are now usefully employed by the sturdy crofter fishermen, and in season are alive with the stir of coasting ships, coal-sloops, and herring-fishing boats. The eyes leap

with delight on the waving trees that spring into sight at ducal Dunrobin; faint and dim in the distance is old Tain and the sandy mouth of the Dornoch Firth—unsafe and shallow haven, abhorred by cods and seamen.

Morayshire is like a blur on the vista and streaks of light at night; the bold Souters of Cromarty guide us into the leg-like Bay of Cromarty, about the finest roadstead in the world, where the whole fleet might safely ride, and Balnagown Castle gleams from sheltering woods. All the way up to Dingwall the eye rests on a varied and rich tapestry, changeful and exceedingly beautiful, which, after the bolder scenery, approaches the idyllic. One with a mania for firth and sea scenery will be here satiated by seas and shores; the stretching blue hills, never free of clouds, seascape at every turn of shore, the quiet life of the Ferries—so full of sunlight and shadows, like Celtic natures—still villages, and overhanging woods. The long recesses, the well-tilled fields, keep smiling on the sailor with joy about the Moray Firth, with Beauly's sheltered bay of little interest, clean Nairn, Burgh Head, putrescent of fish, like all fishing towns, and supposed to be the *Ultimatum Ptororton* of the Romans. The trip by rail looking seawards brings out the brilliancy of the Firth's panoramic windings probably better than from the ship, and if you have a love for the picturesque in land or sea you will at once resolve to spend a holiday here before you die. One's heart warms on returning from the grey

Herring Boats. Drawn by Alfred Dawson.

serrated coast and dark skerries of the northern shores to the fertile fields aglow in summer with ripening grain, the grateful fringe of swishing trees, the deep colour of the soil, the cosy towns along the Morayshire coast. The fishing towns between here and Peterhead are numerous and enterprising —Buckie, Portsoy, Cullen, Banff, Macduff, Rosehearty, Fraserburgh—whose reliance is placed on the stormy seas, and not the barren earth, for subsistence. They are fishing towns and nothing more —grimy, fishy, picturesque, though dirty, with odd, quaint figures lounging about odd, quaint boats at odd, quaint harbours, where the boats' brown hulls and spars send ruddy reflections on the lapping waters, which are green under the boats' shadows. There one may observe the vast influence the capture of fish has on communities; all the towns thrive or starve by the herring fishing; all the natives, from the Provosts downwards, hold shares in the fishing-boats; and from the very aspect of the streets you can judge the success or failure of the great seas' harvest. No British seas are so inseparably associated with the toilers of the deep as are the great Northern seas, where fishing-boats are ever to be seen tossing about.

Southward we pass in rapid rotation Peterhead, with its red granite houses, its boats of steel, and its men with heads of iron, with its Hell's Lum ever at hand; small fishing ports, where from the road you can gaze down the fishermen's cottage chimneys and peep into their kail-pots; little fish-

ing hamlets, boldly perched on the top of rocks almost all the way southwards; the weird Bullers of Buchan, which keep their weirdness in sunshine as in gloom, and make you agree with Dr. Johnson that you would sooner send your greatest enemy to reside in the Red Sea than in this unearthly caldron; and from the sea are seen the shining spires, and towers, and crowns of grey Aberdeen, and in the distance its isolated Black Dog. Next comes picturesque Stonehaven (Steenhive of its native doric) with part of its folk huddled close on the sea-rim, and the modern villa offshoots perched on the braes; and the crumbling Castle of Dunnottar, whose hoary antiquity seems an infant's breath compared with the illimitable past recorded in its wonderful cliffs, built up of the stones that rolled themselves smooth in the wash of primeval seas; then little Bervie, rendered historical by its dearth of guid ale when its Provost drank water; the peaceful pastoral hill of Garvock, where in days of yore the diabolical lairds of the neighbourhood tasted the "broo" of the Laird of Gardenstone boiled to death in a caldron in too literal fulfilment of their royal master's wrathful wish.

Montrose lies flat as a platter, with the sea like a smiling canal lapping at its garden walls—this when no storm is on; for then the marshalled waves nowhere show grander front of battle than as they advance on the downs of Montrose; next we have Arbroath, with its red sandstone in cathedral and cottage—quaint, full of odd ways and character

study; straggling, interesting Carnoustie rejoicing in its excellent golfing links and great sandy beach, where ladies innumerable bathe, unblessed and unhampered by bathing-coaches; and then we pass the mouth of the Tay (where we hear what sailors call the Roaring Lion), smiling and laughing under its halo of smoke from "Bonnie Dundee," as if it had not forgotten the joy of its earlier existence amid the most charming landscapes that Scotland can show. The hills lie silent in the distance, big steamers throb their way with labouring pulsations, and with gay sheets hauled close, and gunwales heeled over and touching the hissing foam, boats skim merrily all day long. Brilliant St. Andrews, sparkling as with jewels in sunshine, where John Knox toiled in a French galley; the Bell Rock Lighthouse, recalling the story of the malignant and well-rewarded pirate, and the serrated coast of the East Neuk of Fife, alive with memories of many a fatal shipwreck and many a deed of lifeboat daring; and now before us lies the mouth of the Firth of Forth, with the Isle of May sending by night its glow of orange fire into the heart of the darkness of vast wild waves, and slashing rain, and driving hurricane of east wind. Once, with several bottles of rum, we came to the isle to spend two or three days, to make acquaintance with the Forth pilots who perch here, but no pilots appeared. Here let us cast anchor, and visit a fisherman's cottage.

The interior of a fisherman's house is worth see-

ing. You find crockery, wall-ornaments, and bits of pictures that are nowhere else to be seen; they reflect the simple taste and peculiar idiosyncrasies of the fisher folk. The huge well-filled bed, with heavy curtains, though stuffy, looks decidedly inviting, and made to remain in, as it is difficult to get in or out of; you often surprise a fisherman resting there during the day, and as he rises on his elbow reproduces the picture of the poor wayfarer, and his wife that of the good Samaritan. In front of the bed, as a seat, is the husband's chest, holding his Sunday clothes. Above the dresser or kitchen table and on the plate-rack are ranged in rows dinner plates of various makes and colours, and hung round the beams on nails are milk jugs, all in pairs: I have counted in one house as many as a dozen different patterns. These plates and jugs are not for ordinary daily use, but for the picturesque ornamentation of their walls. On the mantelpiece and on shelves are many stone-ware figures, brilliantly coloured, generally Portobello ware, representing shepherds and shepherdesses in Arcadian guise, sailors and their sweethearts in everlasting embrace, Burns and Highland Mary, the Babes in the Wood, and Napoleon and the Prince Consort, with underneath appropriate snatches of poetry, and Delf dogs in the very picture of health and gorgeous hues look contentedly down. There are pictures, such as Raising the Widow of Nain's son, a shipwreck and the rescuing lifeboat, and a cheap print of the Queen—and in a window corner the

family are photographed, the men in working garb, the women carrying creels on their backs, all justly proud of their calling. In the corner stands the antique well-filled corner cupboard, containing their best tea set, used on high days and family gatherings. Stout antique brass candlesticks set off the ends of the mantelpiece. Each house has its framed memoriam cards of those who have been drowned. Sometimes they possess an inner apartment—"the room"—with another huge bed, and a substantial chest of drawers with spiral pillars. A large family Bible is placed on the table, covered with a crimson cloth; and on the hearthstone is a home-made many-coloured rug. In the garret and about the kitchen are stowed away nets and fishing gear. Round fish creels, and long shallow creels with coils of lines resting on beds of fresh-cut grass, each line with a hundred or so of hooks baited with bits of bright-coloured sand-worm or glistening clam, lie about the house or the door ready for the goodman (as the husband is called) going to the sea.

All along this eastern coast you must bluffly face the blast that comes raw as whiskey and keen as a razor. The assertive east wind braces one up if it does not make the blood thin; you must stand up to it, and learn to brag of the rasping wind that keeps the eastern shores cool, that endows you with ruddy health, and makes the natives as boisterous as the breeze. In these fishing towns you should

hear it in spring, singing its own praises to many a pretty tune, which it does in no pickthank manner, but with a right hearty goodwill and merry gusto. This whistling, piercing wind is the making of the east-coast fishermen, aye, and of more than them.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRTH OF FORTH.

Great thoroughfare—The Fife coast—The Haddington coast—Bait-gatherers—Oyster-dredging song—Fishermen's love for sea—Tragedies—Berwickshire coast—Northumberland coast.

THE Firth of Forth (of old called the Scots' Sea) is the greatest sea thoroughfare and has probably the most beautiful panorama of sea-scenery in Scotland. On both sides the Firth is made majestic with the presence of great hills. All sorts and conditions of vessels ply on the picturesque waters: brown-sailed fishing-boats up the Firth dredging for clams or fishing for crabs and haddocks, tacking and dodging about all day long; the deep-sea boats, in their season, speeding out in leaps and bounds, as if aware of the distance to the sea and eager to reach their destination, their brown sails, wind-taut, bending to the breeze with easy, sweeping grace; see how they race in friendly emulation, and are now lost to view behind the green islands. The hulking steamers plough the sea by sheer strength, leaving behind dense circular volumes of smoke, which, revolving into curls and

then into streaks, dissipate in specks into thin air. When an east wind blows sharp, and breaks the deep blue Firth into white-ridged waves, you find amusement in forecasting home-coming steamers by the smoke blown ahead of them on the horizon :— you speculate from which port they have come, whether from Iceland or Shetland or Norway ; from Danish ports, Hamburgh or Rotterdam ; from Hull or from London. I have heard old wives from inland farms wondering what sort of folk are on board, where they came from, where and what they are going to do—questions that come naturally to the Scots. Handsome schooners resplendent in the glory of sails full set, move eloquently up the Firth. Jersey smacks (all smacks are called Jersey smacks, wherever they sail from, as the first smacks came here from Jersey) and brigs sail in old-fashioned leisure style, with old-fashioned airs, and one would think for the observer's pleasure, so stately do they look in last-century make and rigging. The *Pride* has regularly run with potatoes from Dunbar to London for thirty years—isn't that something for a boat to be proud of ?

This sea thoroughfare has, like any street thoroughfare, its prowlers, its loafers, and its leisure class. The former you have in the pert steam trawlers, the bugbears of fishermen, which keep rushing out and in, to and from the three-mile limit, with their catches. The leisure class you have in yachts with clean sails, to distinguish them unnecessarily from fishing-boats, careering about in an

aimless, amateurish way. Pilot-boats cruise about, and on signal from a schooner race and chase for their prize like greyhounds from the slips. To these ships, to the sailors, to fishermen wayfarers, to all alike, the sea or the Firth has no favourite, makes no difference; but at times one might think, as he looks with one eye on the harbours and the other eye on the sea, that the refulgent splendour of the sun, and the charms of the wind and weather, love to dwell with the fisherman's modest boat, his simple dress, his patched sails, and that the ardour of the breeze loves to blow and whistle and grow merry among these sails and puff them out, and send them home dancing over the waves with gladness, and leave the statelier and heavier ships groaning and creaking far behind. This great thoroughfare, this sea scene, is never vacant: like the sea it is never at rest; there is a continual traffic on this highway of life and commerce. The inner Firth and the stretch of sea is never dull; if there is not a coming and going of boats and vessels—and their absence presages great storms—there is the majesty of the mighty waters, the play of clouds and sunshine on the sea, making them everlastingly interesting in changing hues and tones and forms: the mind of man seeing in them whatever the imagination suggests; and there is the company of sea birds on the shore or on the sea, darting about in their white feathers like specks of sunshine, with their sad monotonous calls, like echoes and cries from the crested sea-waves. This thoroughfare is set in a striking frame. The king-

dom of Fife looks southwards on the hazy seaboard hills and Laws and rich fields of the Lothians, and they smile on the clearer northern shores of Fife, the nestling fishing towns like red dots on grey shores; and the shores keep smiling on each other. The rocky shores, the Gothic and Norman church spires peeping above cosy villages with warm, red-tiled roofs, the ancient castles standing on prominences, the undulating golf links; the bold presences of the green islands breaking the view and sheltering the ships, the Bass Rock, bolt upright with white sides smiling to the sun and the sea, the Isle of May, a sentinel by day and a lighthouse by night, the Laws or conical hills on both sides, the Paps of the Lomonds towering high in Fife, the shoulders of the Lammermuirs rounding off the Haddington coast, the Pentlands up the firth like clouds, and wrought as into this scroll-work Arthur's Seat amid the smoke from Auld Reekie and the Port o' Leith. At night the lighthouses proclaim the unwearied care for this highway; the villages shed sparkling lights seawards; and the steamers, with blazes of light, keep up the ceaseless traffic that makes eloquent our British seas.

From the Isle of May up the Forth, on both sides, are upwards of forty piers and tidal harbours, roadsteads, and sheltered anchorages. Looking up the Forth from the May is one of the finest seascapes; and should the eastern harr blot out the sights, you have always trawlers, which shelter and prowl about, and the ways of birds here to study. Along the Fife

coast you notice the happy device of man in having built the parish churches on heights and added Dutch-like spires, so that they stand out as guides to the mariners, and thus their influence is not confined to their parish. All that mariners know of these towns is that good water and moderate supplies can be obtained, and fishing-boats ride jauntily all day long. All the towns have good harbours, some the oldest to be seen ; and, strange to say, beacons lit at night are in some cases shown from the brae-heads above the harbour, and not from the harbours. These towns are the places one can spend a week to profit in studying the ways of fisher-folk, their superstitions, their nick-names, and how, to be identified, some have to adopt their wives' names ; the characteristic interiors of their houses, which they effectively decorate with Delf dogs, and jugs,and crockery; the rise and fall of fishing, the effect of trawlers and trawling. At Anstruther for three continuous days hawkers with their vans from far inland hung on at the harbour in the bare hope of some native boats having to run home with a catch from the herring-fishing at Aberdeen by stress of weather, but their prayers for a north-east storm were unanswered. The towns and villages all run in narrow lines, with steep and narrow streets, reel-rall, ramstam houses, built in a Fifish, independent, queer, odd manner, with tortuous bends and turns, displaying the character of the folk, with foot-roads where none could be expected, gardens in front of their houses to the sea-shore, and open to the public·

What strange oddities of houses! what character in buildings and through-otherness! Where no links are to dry nets on, the witted natives have erected posts on the beach, and at East Wemyss you see clothes drying from clothes-posts in the sea, which runs right up to the houses, and at West Wemyss a coalpit-mouth opens into the harbour. Out of this coalpit-mouth you see at night appearing, as if by magic, scores of tidy, clean factory girls busy knitting—the result of a cunning old footpath alongside the beach and cutting along the pit-mouth.

These tumble-towns, with odd designs and life, remind you of Devonshire. Crail at the one end, Kinghorn at the other, and the intervening towns on the sea—Anstruther, Cellardyke, Pittenweem, St. Monance, Elie, Largo, the Wemyss, Buckhaven, Dysart, and Kirkcaldy—all are chokefull of the picturesque, old-world feeling, old-world folk, and old-world buildings, where evening shades clothe the seascapes with poetry, and make poor odd buildings poetical in the moonlight, and the huddled, projecting, receding, falling and rising house-tops and gable-ends like the homes of fancy, and the salmon stake-nets like huge spider-webs, the boats drawn up on the links like monsters of the deep, and the fishermen about the harbours like heroes in romance—whereas they are heroes in fact. As you sail along you come upon one red-tiled fishing town the moment you leave the other, so close are they together; and this you will the more readily notice as the sun shines on the red tiles and white gables, and a cloud travels and wipes out the

Village near Frazerburgh. Drawn by J. Pennell.

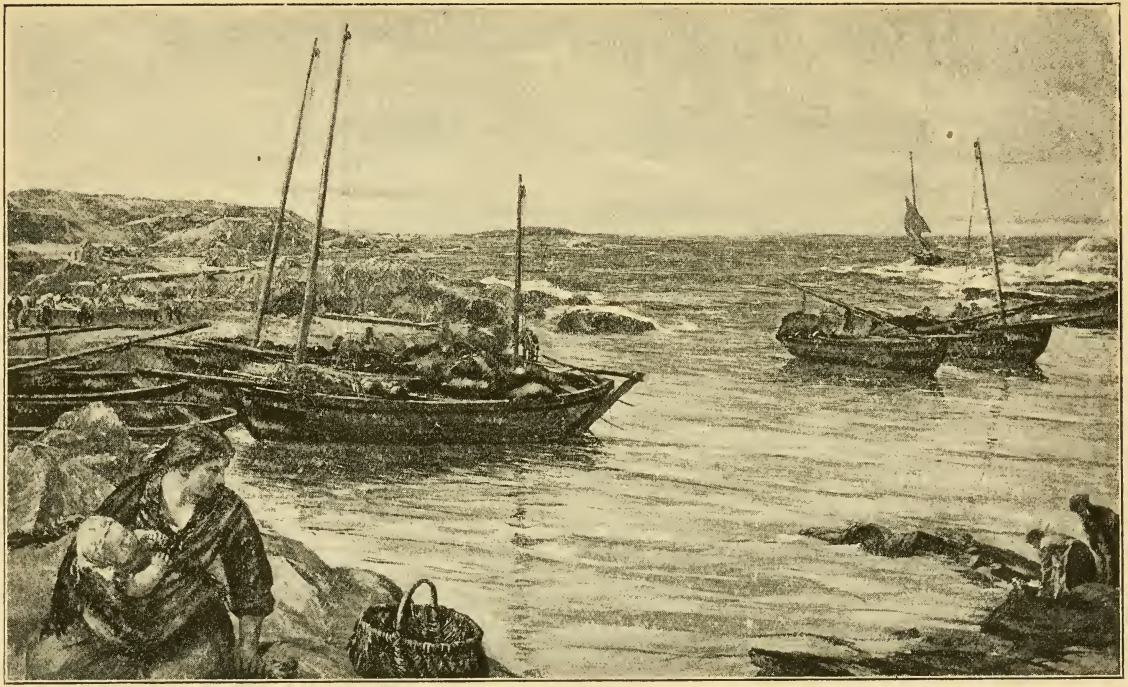
warm light and leaves in succession all the villages in sombre grey. Sunshine and shade make fine studies; the sun shines on houses or sea, and they return the greeting; in shade they have the sympathy of the folk who look on them always in shade. A quiet, tender, grey beauty, with brilliant glimpses, hangs on the Fife coast, and the wanderer along the variegated scenery of bluff coasts, glass caves, curious rocks, fine bays and towns, listening to the voice of the sea made manifest in the harbours, soon becomes in sympathy with the "racy" folk from whom the prototype of Robinson Crusoe sprang, and where many an autotype lies dormant. It is no stretch on one's imagination to see Largo's ancient harbour formed by a pier of rough stones on the east, and rocks marked by warping posts on the west, and think of Selkirk's twice sudden departure from his home; its smell would put to flight many a good man with not too fastidious olfactory organs. How like a man, a Fife fisherman, was Selkirk, who alone is honoured by a public monument on this seaboard—the first time he left Largo was to run off to sea, the last was with a native girl. The observer along this seaboard will never question the actuality of Robinson Crusoe; he would be quite prepared to hear that every town laid claim to being his nativity, romance and daring run so strong in the Fifeshire fishermen's veins.

Along the Haddington coast you observe for the first time in these northern shores that the wealth of the folks is drawn from generous soil, and that

the harbours are neither numerous nor good. The glow of the sea is over the red soil, the red sandstone houses, and the red roof-tiles. The atmosphere is clarified, wide awake, and the keen breeze keeps one's thoughts revolving. The fields are ploughed, and the teams come to the footpath which follows the edge of the coast, and thus those who plough the sea, and those who plough the land, look upon each other. The one sees the vessel change her tack, the other sees the plough turning at the end of the furrow. On the grass-covered rocky ridges at bright Canty Bay (so inseparably associated with Sam Bough, R.S.A.) the sheep browse and skip like goats. Between the Bass and the May a sea-fight, five centuries ago, took place between the Scotch and English, when an English admiral and three ships were captured.

> "The battle fiercely it was fought
> Near to the craig of Bass;
> When we next fight the English loons,
> May nae waur come to pass."

Probably Dunbar, with its harbour—which tradition says was built by Cromwell—is the most picturesque in the Firth, with ruins of its once-important castle for a figure-head at its entrance, where Paul Jones and Captain Fall, the sea adventurers, made their presence felt; and the old surrounding buildings make one feel that something should happen. So do the fishermen who "loaf" about the shadow of the boats, cluster on winter nights in a coalshed, and crowd under high stone

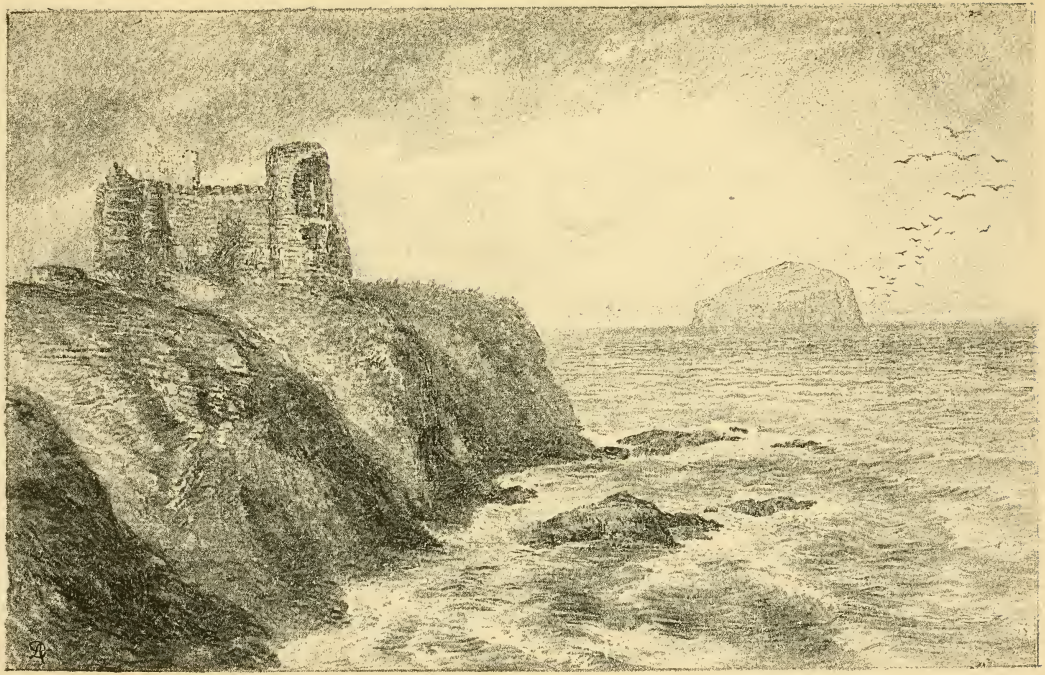


Home Again. From a picture by J. C. Hook, R.A.

walls, and put off going to sea. To them the deep sea has little interest; it has lost its romance. Time was when shoals of herring-boats (as many as five hundred) were to be found here; now they are content with small boats and small ambition, and happy with having an easy time. So strong is the fishermen's dislike against the trawlers, that they do not themselves trawl or dredge, but fish with hook and line. Dunbar fishermen, like others, are terribly disinclined to venture into the open sea. If it is a stormy day, it is too strong for their boats; if it is a good day, they will go out for crabs and haddocks. Yet fishermen further up the Firth come racing past, and take from their mouths the bread those Dunbar fishermen should be earning. Some philosophers find an explanation in the rocky-mouthed harbour, a regular boat-trap—the jaws of death on a stormy day—and so will reason that men of enterprise will seek safer harbour, and thus it is left for degenerate fishermen to remain; but these men are, after all, brave sailors. Dunbar once owed much of its prosperity to the perilous industry of its fishermen, who have a society of their own dating back to 1706. It was once the centre of successful herring-fishing, but the old places that in days of yore were burghers' residences, and banks, and shipping offices, are now fishermen's dwellings, militia stores, and public-houses. Looking down old closes on a sunny day, with whitewashed walls, bright red tiles, and the deep blue ocean beyond, is as looking upon a Union Jack. High stands the

parish church, catching the fisherman's eye far at sea. The fishermen at one general election were told by pot-house politicians that if they voted for one candidate, who would disestablish the Church, when they were drowned at sea and their bodies brought on shore, they would not receive decent Christian burial; that the church would be pulled down, the ancient landmark would be gone, and they would have no guide for the harbour. This fallacy was exposed by opposing politicians, but the simple-minded fishermen shook their heads and said, "We ken fine what ye want." Further east is the Cove, where sea and mountains meet in enduring embrace in a rock-bound coast. The harbour, almost concealed, has been tunnelled out of a cliff with its entrance to the sea on the east. This little community has gone into mourning since the sad storm in October, 1881, which overwhelmed a number of its boats and the flower of its fishermen; so great was the loss and terrible the shock, that not till this day have the survivors recovered the strength of courage to venture into the deep-sea fishing.

Graceful, handsome, beautiful North Berwick, with its tidy harbour and handful of fishing people, gives one the impression that, whatever it might have been in the past, the harbour is now mainly a thing of beauty and a picturesque adjunct to amuse the summer visitors, and that the fishermen stand in the same position, and are stowed away into an old granary, whither they are driven by the inundations of visitors from the city. It is odd to see



Tantallon Castle and the Bass Rock. Drawn by Alfred Dawson.

broad fishermen, with blue jerseys and red cravats, with braces where no braces should be seen, carrying golf-clubs on the links, their only plea being that the fishing is "done," thanks to the trawlers. They live in hopes of better times, and by amusing the summer visitors. Here the colours and beauty of nature fascinate—the splendid sanded beach and grassy links, with their winding undulations, the blue sea broken by the eye-filling Bass and the smaller islands, grim and grey Tantallon Castle towering on the high cliffs, and the bright northern air making warm the red sandstone houses and you ruddy with healthy glow. The Bass Rock with its solan geese, its ruinous prison, is well worth visiting, as its history of the lives and deaths of Scot's politicians and Scot's preachers is a miniature history of Scotland. Next are Port Seton and Cockenzie, excellent types of fishing villages—the fishermen's houses, which are modern and belong to themselves, are of small villa style, with conveniences. Here the men are steady and enterprising and proud of their calling, which they prosecute with success in their deep-sea boats. In the beginning of June you will find them in the south of Ireland. They return home in July, and go to the west or north of Scotland, and north of England, where they remain till September. They next go south to Lowestoft in October, and are only back again to hold their New Year. They take to the sea as they take to their religion, with keen gusto; religious views are their hobby, and all the sects in

the world are to be found preached with zeal by the Cockenzie fishermen. It is a treat to come across a fisherman here who is not a preacher, and who will not tell you your destiny in five or ten minutes. He is an ideal modern democrat, with little or no superstition, little or no picturesqueness in life, but an excellent fisherman. Then there is Prestonpans, one of the oldest Scottish fishing villages, half asleep, harbourless, almost deserted by its fishermen. The sea has made such inroads that it beats now against the backs of houses. The quaint houses, with stone outside stair-steps terribly worn, and low-roofed rooms, are characteristic of the place. In front of the fishermen's pew in the church hangs an oil painting representing boats at sea, with appropriate quotation from the Psalms around the frame—the only painting that hangs in any Presbyterian church in Scotland.

The most picturesque figures all along the coast are the bait-gatherers. In the early morning stillness, when one, after bathing, is resting behind the shadow of a rock, the air is broken by distant voices, sounding like sea-birds; the sounds come nearer—you make them out to be human voices by the peculiar sharp click; afar off are troops of figures rapidly approaching on the sands, the sounds articulate into words, and the baiters pass with steady swinging pace that would do any man credit. They are going for "lugworm" bait for white fishing, which lasts till September (clam bait is only got in May); it is the sweetest and best

bait, and is generally got in greatest number where sand and mud mix, as at Musselburgh or on the great stretches of sand at Aberlady, or at the mouth of the rivers. The spade the bait-gatherers use is small, and the fishing girls ply it deftly with their hands; a push of the spade, a grip of the hand, and the worm slips into the pitcher. Much skill and quickness are necessary, otherwise the worm would swiftly elude the gatherer. Only those trained from their childhood can ever hope to earn a living by the work, or to bring home a sufficient supply in their pitchers. The troops of women in early morning, or late at evening, on the wide sands against the expanse of sky and sea are a sight not readily forgotten. To one on the links the bait-gatherers afar off on the sands seem in their delving with their spades as if engaged in a sand-field. They are suitably attired in unison with their open-air surroundings—sometimes bareheaded, and invariably barefooted; the married women may be known from the unmarried by wearing footless stockings, the unmarried girls not being ashamed to show their bright bare legs; their hair is often concealed by coloured kerchiefs tied under their chins and falling over their shoulders; their faces have the healthy hue bred of the sun and the sea-breeze, and sometimes their cheeks and hands are as brown as berries; they wear gowns of print drawn up, ample and many-tucked dark-blue petticoats. Often they relieve their long walks to and from the sand-beds by snatches of song, which coming from

stout lungs may offend the fastidious. The tide waits not for them, and so they have to be at their task at irregular hours in the summer months. In early morning the village streets are awakened to the patter of their bare feet and to their merry laughter, and the vigorous sound of their singing. If the men are proverbially poor walkers, these bait-gatherers, sometimes old women (who have to eke out a subsistence by selling to the fishermen the "lugworm" at one shilling a pitcherful), strike out with a free pace. With fisherwomen, as with all labouring classes, youth and strength have the best of it. For the woman there is never at any time leisure for folding of the hands, nor any passive grief; she must ever be up and doing. Women have ample work in a fishing community. Getting bait, redding the nets, mending them, baiting the lines, attaching carefully bits of lugworm, clam, or mussel to hooks on long cords of strong brown lines ("baiting the wands" is a phrase they use for sorting the deep-sea lines) provide constant occupation, and young girls soon earn enough to make them independent. The woman is, indeed, absolutely necessary as a helpmate, a partner to a fisherman, and, without her, he would have to pay other women for the work, so few fishermen are unmarried. At Dunbar it is said that the fisherman deteriorates from the day of his marriage.

Prestonpans was once famous for its oysters, which bore the mouth-filling name of the "Pandore." It is some thirty years ago since an un-

touched bed of oysters was discovered. With the disappearance of the oysters the glory of Prestonpans seems to have set. Old men, when the oyster beds were, as they say, properly clad with oysters, have got twenty thousand in a day, and now they could, with a struggle, get one thousand in a week. Oysters, as might be imagined, bearing such a beautiful name as the "Pandore," were excellent, and famous beyond Scotland. Associated with the oysters is preserved what is probably the oldest surviving bit of lore connected with fishing folk along the Scottish coast. The oysters were dredged, as they still are, a few miles from the shore by two men and two boys—as well as clams, so valuable for bait. It was a belief, probably well founded, that oysters would rise the better from their beds to the music of a song. So, as the ancient fishermen and boys dredged they would raise at the pitch of their voices the dredger's song—

> "Dreg an oyster, dreg a clam,
> Dreg an auld wife, or dreg an auld man."

How old these words are, and what their origin was, none can tell: these lines alone survive of the original ditty. Old fishermen, as their fancy prompted, added line upon line; they are the same ancient grandfathers who declare that the metre is Burns', who wag their heads at the song, and find pleasure in recalling the parcels of nonsense their rhymes were. Some lines are preserved by word of mouth as a specimen of the extempore addition,

and they have the fisherman's home-made flavour :—

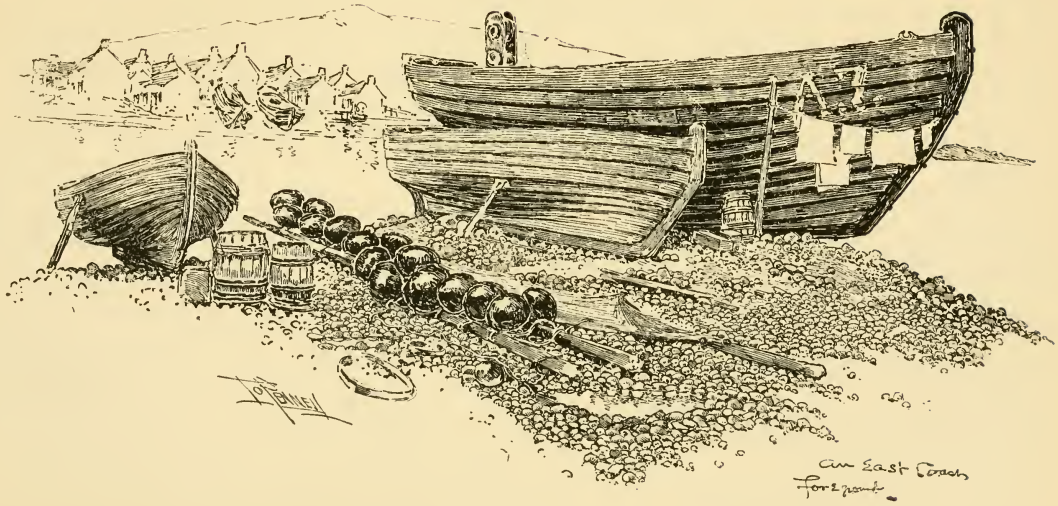
> "It's my sang an' your tale—
> Brandy's guid 'mong het ale."

And another,—

> "An' as ye work, it shall be seen,
> It shall be seen upon the green."

It is the firm belief of the natives that the oyster beds were robbed to supply English fisheries some thirty years ago, when they were thoroughly cleaned out.

On both sides of the Forth the fishermen in every place impress themselves strongly. A fisherman is never found on tramp; seldom does he become a hind. He may toil on the land for some months; but summer winds blow and the sea asserts itself: he bids good-bye to the land and its labour. With what irresistible might does the sea enforce its claim to its children! and sometimes death only makes the insatiable mother more tenacious. Among fisherfolk, the descendants of fisherfolk who are riveted to the sea, there is a glamour in the sea, and from generations born to generations to be born this undying fatalism prevails. It seems to be out of the power of men to throw off this mighty law of nature. Like kings and queens, fisherfolk marry among themselves. This omnipresence of the sea for the fishers of the sea binds them by the cry of the waves, and the saline savour of the ocean unceasingly imparts to them the fixedness of their destiny, and proclaims the law of their nature,



An East Coast Foreground. Drawn by J. Pennell.

which spells out the message: "Remain; be content; be happy; go round and round in the one narrow rut; make a little, a very little, money; scrape enough of food and sleep; the sea will feed thee with ancient fables, and will claim thee for her own if old age and poverty escape thee." Some who are not born with fishermen's blood are drawn into this vortex-like influence. On a fishing-boat you soon feel the illimitable depth and wonder of the unknown surging around the boundless sky and sea, from which flight seems hopeless and escape impossible. To the simple-minded fishers, how unspeakable the delight of drawing with their nets money out of the sea in silvern fish, and reaping where they have not sown. Deep into their hearts has sunk the wild romance of the sea, and their stout hearts throb the more for joy of the large life of the ocean.

What a godsend it is that fishermen inherit nautical instincts, so sharpened by exercise as to make them lion-hearted! No man need venture to sea in a fishing-boat unless he has daring and skill. Fishermen have the blessed belief that they are safer in their own easily managed crafts, in which they ride through storms like sea-gulls, than they would be in larger vessels. The deep-sea boats ride through almost any sea. When a storm springs up, they prefer to keep the open sea rather than enter the Firth, and encounter the tides, the rocky coasts, in dark nights when the wind whistles and cries funereally in their ears, the masts croak, and the

boat labours frightfully, as if for its existence, and the great waters tear over its bows and rush alongside as if the monster Death were chasing the boat for a victim; while the start of a nail, the leakage of a plank, the rent of a sheet, or crack of a mast might give him entrance, and in a jiffy they would all be swept to Davy Jones's locker. The story of storms, the battle of the waves, and the artillery of the tempest carry sad, sad tales to the mean cottages in these fishing towns and villages, particularly Eyemouth in recent years, of the death of fishermen; how some are knocked overboard by loosened sails, some killed by falling masts, some found entangled in nets, and others gone amissing at sea and never more heard, tell of—all drowned, and so write sorrow on the bosom of the mighty deep. Let's talk of the tragedies of this coast (to paraphrase Richard II.) and of comfort let no man speak. In great storms near Dunbar—and as many as eight wrecks in that rock-bound district have been counted in one day—it is not uncommon to see vessels and men go down within sight and reach of the harbour, beyond human aid. At Eyemouth, one sad day in October, 1881, one hundred and thirty of the fishermen were drowned. When death strikes at one, it strikes at every other fisherman's door, so closely related are they by blood or marriage.

In the rural churchyard around Whitekirk (so often painted by Alexander Frazer, R.S.A.), the parish kirk of the scenes of many shipwrecks at

Scoughall, Seacliff, and Auldhame rocks—where unknown and unclaimed men from the seas lie at rest (the only sounds that break the inland quiet being the voices of ruddy hinds' children at the school playground, or of young labourers making music on concertinas in the churchyard in the evenings, as they wait for farm lasses practising in the kirk psalm-tunes for Sunday's choir): there, in this churchyard, sways with every breeze that blows a modest tin-plate "headstone," quaintly commemorating the tragedies of this coast in these suggestive lines:—

> "I went to sea! Death came to me!
> And took me hence away!
> The ship was wrecked, and all was lost
> Upon that Fatal day.
> Death comes to all, both great and small,
> And it shall come to you."

And yet, to the hinds and cottager shipwreck are not unmixed calamities; as their experience proves, they are special dispensations of providence in their favour. For instance, some hinds were sent as usual at spring to cart seaware from the beach, and one was seen suspiciously to pick up something and secretly put it in his pocket. It was only some brass buttons from a shipwreck, he said, not worth an auld sang; but a remarkably sudden transformation came over the fortune of that man's family. It must, in justice, be said that the labourers at Seacliff, and the hinds at Auldhame, under the charge of the farmer, gallantly and successfully work

the life-saving apparatus there both by day and by night.

You notice that each prominence of this rocky, bluff seaboard is possessed by magnificent castles beetling on the ocean—Tantallon, Dunbar, Fast (scene of the "Bride of Lammermuir"), Berwick, and Bamborough, all bearing the golden stains of time, to quote Mr. Ruskin, the great glory of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity, and, let me add, by the sounding waves of the sea. No man can look unmoved on the seascapes here—those modern sea-knights, the fishermen of Grace Darling's country, cradled in surge and storm—the old castles, the older villages, overlooking the wide swell of the German Ocean, within reach of its hoarse, resounding waves, where nature becomes rich in tints and colours, and where the atmosphere is aglow with lambent light which artists make manifest; the generous seaboard soil; the warmer colour and greater wealth of land and sea; the great Border country—so associated with burly borderers' bloody struggles and international conflicts—that greets so kindly the all-night traveller from London in the morning, and leaps straight into a warm corner of his heart. The coast's high cliffs are haunted by geologists, botanists, naturalists, and sea-birds, where the sea's sombrous sound is symbolic of the monotonous melancholy main. Picturesque Berwick! (where, by the way, a distance seaward of five miles is

claimed for trawlers) with laws and speech of its own—Scottish in blood and in Scottish soil, yet of English fashion, with its old gates and high walls—and Holy Island across the wide, wet sands, with its tiny castle and two soldiers in charge, where you will get your heart's content of fishermen's yarns of smuggling, shipwrecks, and catches, are worth visiting by any child of romance. The Farne Isles dot the sea; down the straight, dangerous Northumberland coast peaceful, pretty hamlets succeed each other, and you reach bright, breezy Tynemouth, jutting out to sea and nestling under Prince's Haven, where we are at rest.

CHAPTER X

THE NORTH SEA.

The Port of Newcastle—The River Tyne—View from the high level bridge—Story of the Tyne—Types of Tyne-built ships—The old collier—The Tyne in mid-winter—Armstrong, Mitchell, and Co.—Robert Stephenson & Co.—Ordnance and locomotives—Tynemouth and Cullercoats—The story of the lifeboat—Henry Taylor and the lightship—Grace Darling—Collingwood's crew at Trafalgar—Sunderland: its narrowness, its industries—Seaham harbour and Lord Byron—The Hartlepools—A pretty winter picture—The well-deck steamer—Middlesborough and the Tees—The story of the Tees—Mr. John Vaughan and the Cleveland Hills.

THE port of Newcastle is twenty miles long. Such prodigious dimensions I was unable to understand until it was explained to me that the port begins at the mouth of the river down at Tynemouth and South Shields, though how high up it extends I am unable to say, unless the district called "Scotswood" be its limit. The Tyne is not a river that one would call noble. It lacks the majesty that one finds in the Thames below bridges, despite the disgusting colour of the water till one falls in with the blue of the Channel tide, streaming in to clarify London's rolling volume of pease-soup; nor has it the dignity of the Mersey, nor the beauty of the Clyde; but in

my humble judgment the Tyne is a more remarkable stream than all the other rivers put together.

It was but the other day, so to speak—well, within living memory, at all events—that the bar at the mouth of the Tyne obstructed the entrance of any sort of vessel that was at all bigger than Fielding's famous cod-smack. At low water, as it is called, people pulled off their shoes and stockings and waded across, whilst there were parts where the bed of the river dried into hard mud. The transformation that has been wrought makes this river the wonder that everybody finds it. Steamers whose tonnage runs into thousands come and go, and they come and go with as much facility in the River Tyne as in the River Thames. The Docks are such receptacles as to fully justify the pride—I may say, the enthusiasm —with which the people of the district speak about them. The great High Level Bridge, which connects Gateshead and Newcastle for the railway and the pedestrian, is a miracle of skill, of strength, of beauty; an object that when I was living in Newcastle I was never weary of admiring. Robert Stephenson could not have desired to leave a nobler memorial of his genius behind him. I have leaned over the bridge and for long spells at a time have forgotten myself in contemplation of the picture of the river far down beneath me, with its shore of wild and grimy Gateshead on the right, and the busy Quayside and its lengths of palatial offices on the left.

Byron's love of rocks whereon to muse is very well

for the poet who is on the look-out for hints from nature—for a revelation from the stars—for a whisper from the ocean—for some deep secret of the earth, half muttered in the moan of a passage of night wind. But he, as Dr. Samuel Johnson would say, who labours after a just comprehension of the vicissitudes of human life, its vanities, its toils, its achievements, and, let me add (with a side glance at the Quayside), its defeats, its failures, and its humiliations, must take his stand upon the High Level Bridge. It was but the other day, as I have said, that yonder river, flowing darkly many feet below, was an insignificant, fordable stream. How long ago? Well, I believe the year was about 1850, at which date the Tyne came into the hands of its present Conservators. In those days the old town of Sunderland was having it all her own way. The Wear could not be called a rival, for practically there was no Tyne. But some forty years ago, the Tynesiders, with Joseph Cowen at their head—Sir Joseph, who had for a son one of the most eloquent men this nation of eloquent men has ever produced—went to work with a will. There was a Tyne Improvement Bill; and when that was passed the dredger was set to work. The dredger is a species of barge that scoops out mud; how many of these fabrics were employed I do not know. But day after day, for months and months, the monotonously revolving scoops were slowly and obstinately deepening the channel. Then piers were built at the mouth of the river—piers and some docks. Yet I

believe that down to the year 1861 the progress by no means corresponded with the outlay, and with the general Tyneside resolution to reduce the River Wear to a second-hand accomplishment. Ships light of draught, comparatively speaking, took the mud when their hatches were flush, and remained immovable at the top of high water despite the sea-blessings profusely showered upon the Conservators by rough ocean skippers and owners whose "little all" was to be expressed in the words "prompt dispatch." An immense effort was then made, inspired by Mr. Ure, whose name, though a household word at Newcastle, may possibly be unfamiliar to many of the readers of this volume. Mr. Ure came forward with a vast and masterly plan of dredging, and to him—at all events to a very great extent—the Tynesider owes a river he dearly loves and justly boasts of, no matter in what part of the world he may be encountered.

This little piece of local history should be known to the man who pauses upon the High Level Bridge for the purpose of looking about him, and musing upon the varied and wonderful scene that is spread, as on canvas, below. A very forest of chimneys point their sooty apertures skywards, and from every one of them pours the black smoke of the coal-fed furnace, or the white vapour of the chemical works. The atmospheric effects are wonderful and beautiful. The river rolls in a surface of sullen darkling steel betwixt the giant supporters of the great bridge, and the magic of the atmosphere, wrought by the blend-

ing of the lights and shades of the smoke-tinctured district, makes the stream look as wide again as it is.

Twenty types of vessels fix the attention. There is the huge, hideous slate-coloured, camel-backed tank, waiting for her engines. She is the latest horror of one of the ship-building yards betwixt the High Level Bridge and Tynemouth, and a startling example of the ability of the modern shipwright to combine the amplest possibility of insurance with the smallest possible expenditure in the direction of safety. How that deadly structure will show a little later on—that death-dealing structure, whose rivets are no better than sticking-plaster; whose plates provide the same security against the perils of the sea that one would look for in a fabric fashioned out of the lids of bandboxes; whose engines will barely have power to drive her head to wind against a topgallant breeze —how she will presently show, you may gather by observing that steamer at the Quayside, newly arrived, waiting to be discharged; a small ship whose decks, as you look down upon them, are full of motion, of little wriggling, running figures, of revolving steam machinery, and the like. She lies upon the water as a board would; her height of side almost wholly consists of bulwarks. Level those bulwarks—reduce her to the line of her main deck by removing that extraordinary deformity forward, styled a topgallant forecastle, and then, were you to cross to the Gateshead side and survey her from the height of your own stature, you would see nothing

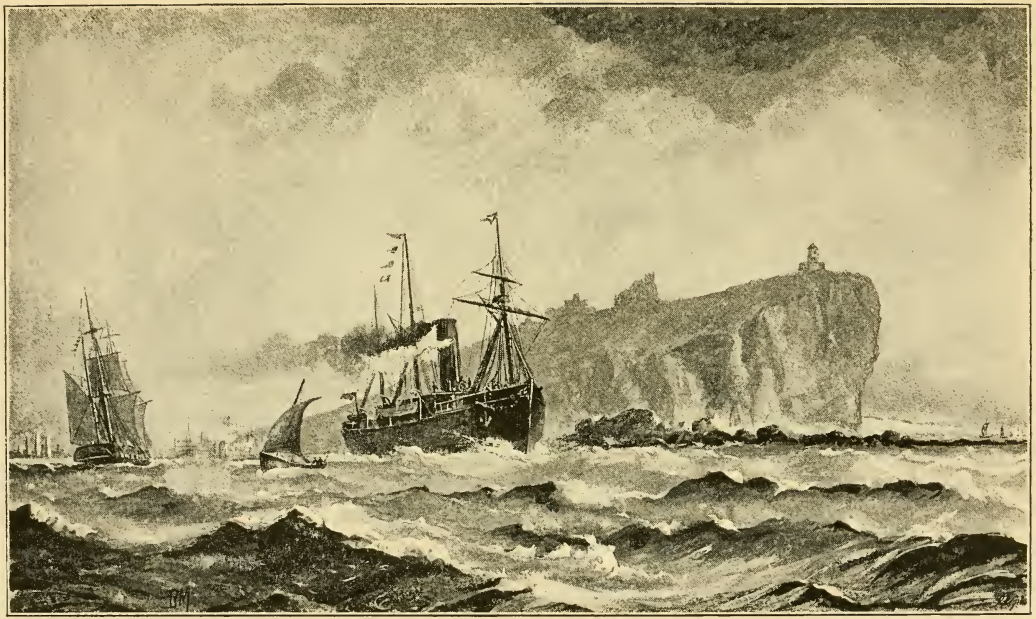
of her hull—nothing of the ship saving the funnel that leans over her stern, and the pole mast in the bow, whose purpose as a derrick is not to be dissembled by its two square yards.

How can captains find men to ship in such vessels? How can owners find captains to take charge of them? It cannot be because sailors "must live," since, to use a Paddyism, sailors can only get their living aboard such craft by perishing. But to the musing, poetic eye, looking down from over the parapet of the High Level Bridge, these man-killing monstrosities serve their turn very well as bits of colour. Their slates and reds, their gleam of glass and sparkle of brass, blend into a sort of beauty with the other richly-hued details. They suggest *life*, menacing as they are with death! They express commerce, and they also indicate that paralyzing stress of competition which is crowding the ports, the docks, and the rivers of this country with lines upon lines of what the old naval Jacks called "Rotten Rows."

The business of the Tyne is more concentrated than that of the Thames, and one seems, therefore, to find more movement here than in the southern stream. The tug snorts, and splashes, and drives; the old collier, too, that seems a hundred years old, is not wanting: see her, lean, gaunt, and hungry, ill-conditioned and beggared by the "strumpet winds," which she has wrestled with for one knows not how long. A little imagination will find something dim and bleared in her aspect, and she seems

to lean upon, rather than to strain at her old chain-cable, as though it were a crutch. The fancy goes to Whitby at sight of her—to Whitby or Blyth, and to Captain Cook. You are witnessing our iron naval story in the making when you look down upon the metal steamer—at the metal sailing ship; but yonder old collier is like the word *finis* at the end of a volume: the story she illustrates is ended; all the old romance, the old life of the sea, its pigtails, its cocked hats, its line-of-battle ships, its press-gangs, are contained in the chapters of which that old Geordie over there might well be the last recorded syllable.

Most of the rivers that I am acquainted with show best on a fine summer's day; but to my mind all that is impressive in the scenery of the Tyne is best accentuated by midwinter, when the sky is dark with bodies of flying vapour whose shoulders are whitened by the rushing snow-squall, when the shrill gale is whipping the water into ripples which foam as they run, when the white of the snow gives a ghastly staring face to the country by contrast with the black and grimy chimneys and coaly structures which crowd the river's banks. When Nature is in these midwinter humours old Father Tyne is entirely in sympathy with her. There seems to be nothing fit in sunshine and blue heavens for this wonderful northern river of labour, smoke, and machinery. Butterflies and flowers, the emerald-bright lawns of the Thames, the stooping and sipping willow, the swan, the little flowery island—



The Mouth of the Tyne. From a drawing by Barlow Moore.

these are things not to be reconciled with one's memory of the winding mills of Tyne, with its railways and its factories, its ironworks and shipbuilding yards, its collieries, its bleak huddles of artisans' homes.

The two distinctive features of Newcastle everybody must own, I think, to be the ordnance works of Armstrong and Co. and the locomotive works of Robert Stephenson and Co. I remember some years ago spending a day in these wonderful factories, and I behold again with the eye of memory the great scene of locomotive shops and sheds, the teeming life, the blazing furnaces, the thunderstorms of smoke and sparks, the gigantic sheaves of metal, the boilers, the rooms thrilling with whirring machinery, the sudden volcanic emissions of blinding brilliance under the action of the fan-blasts, whose pulse trembles through one's bones into the very innermost being of the inner man. I carry with me, too, a lifelong impression of gigantic ordnance—monster pieces finished and unfinished ; and I also remember wondering, as I applied my eye to the mouth of some colossal engine of war, whose power was to be expressed in I know not how many tons, whether, all things being equal, these enormous guns were going to do the execution we read of as the result of a broadside in the days of thirty-six and forty-two pounders. Oppose the metal of the armour-clad to these eighty and a hundred tonners, and oppose the timber sides of an old liner to such guns as Howe won the victory of the 1st of June with—what of

the destruction to follow? When Collingwood, who was born in Newcastle, carried the *Royal Sovereign* into battle he blew out the stern of the *Santa Ana*, and killed and wounded four hundred of her crew. There are a good many problems for the next naval war to solve; but that the science of slaughter in these days is going to prove superior to the art of murder in times which we now pronounce exceedingly primitive, I am never more inclined to doubt than when I think of the yardarm to yardarm engagement, the withering swiftness of the British fire, the volleyings from sharp-shooters in the tops into the crowded, unsheltered decks, with the powder-magazine by no means inaccessible to a round-shot, and a company of nine hundred and perhaps a thousand souls in a ship of about eighteen hundred tons to massacre—when I think, I say, of these things, and then take a view of the weapon that is to throw a projectile seven or eight miles, and reflect upon twelve-inch plates and fabrics sunk almost to the wash of the water.

The mouth of the Tyne offers a picturesque scene as you pass it. On the north shore is Tynemouth, which is to Newcastle and its district as Margate and Ramsgate are to London. The sands of Cullercoats stretch away in gold, and they give a wonderful depth and richness of colour to the chocolate-tinctured line of coast. But though the spirit of griminess holds aloof from Tynemouth, where all is clean and bright and cheerful, full of the suggestions of seaside summer holiday-making,

it lurks very adjacent in North Shields and over the way in South Shields, in defiance of the garden-like effects the people of that famous old coastal town have been importing of late months—with an eye, no doubt, to their rival opposite. Of the two Shields it would be very hard to say which is the grimier. On the whole I think that to South Shields must be conceded all the merit that superior sootiness can claim. But then it is the home, the birthplace, of the Lifeboat! an historic detail of its centuries-old story which must entitle it to the respect and veneration of all seafarers.

For many years Tynemouth obtained the credit of the introduction of the lifeboat. But the matter has been set at rest by the erection at South Shields of a memorial to the two claimants to the invention—Greathead and Wouldhave. It is unfortunate that the respective pretensions of these men cannot be determined. Wouldhave is said to have invented the lifeboat, and Greathead to have improved it; but their contemporaries assumed Greathead as the sole inventor, and in 1802 the House of Commons granted him a sum of 1200*l.* as compensation for his losses over the idea. The story of the first lifeboat was told by Sir Cuthbert Heron, Bart., of South Shields. During a heavy gale of wind a vessel named the *Adventure* stranded on the Herd Sands; Sir Cuthbert was amongst the crowd who viewed the dreadful sight, and he offered a reward to any seaman who should put off to rescue the perishing crew. No man responded. The sea ran

furiously and dangerously high, and there was no boat fit to encounter it. The whole of the crew of the *Adventure* perished within three hundred yards of the shore. The effect of this dismal ocean spectacle upon the public of South Shields was such that a number of persons immediately met, and agreed to offer a reward to any one who should submit a plan of a boat of an approvable sort for the preservation of human life. Greathead's plan or model was thought well of; a committee was formed, and a sum of money raised by subscription for the building of the boat.

Such, in a few words, was the origin of the lifeboat. The boatmen hung in the wind at first; but they were coaxed by offers of reward to man Greathead's fabric, and the experiment once made established her, against their prejudices, as a safe boat. The example of South Shields was followed in course of time by North Shields, Lowestoft, Ramsgate, Montrose, and other places. But how primitive those early boats were, one may judge by the prices charged for building them. A ten-oared boat of the largest size cost a hundred and sixty-five pounds; in these times the charge would be from seven hundred to one thousand pounds. There is no nobler service the wide world over, and South Shields merits all possible applause for honouring the memory of Greathead and Wouldhave.

North Shields should follow the example of her sister over the way by honouring the memory of a man whose work was certainly not less valuable than

that of the inventor of the lifeboat. I refer to Henry Taylor. "Who was he?" inquires the reader. Henry Taylor was an old master-mariner, to whose judgment and indomitable pluck and perseverance the seafaring world owes the Lightship. Until Henry Taylor bestirred himself, that deadly stretch of Channel shoal, called the "Goodwin Sands," was lampless—a vast, black grave on a dark night for the entombing of ships and their crews, and year after year scores were perishing there, and cargoes of value running into hundreds and thousands sinking to the bottom. Observe those sands now: small, but immensely strong, red-hulled vessels ride north and south and east and west of them; their lanterns sparkle brilliantly by night; there are guns and rockets on board to instantly communicate the news of a disaster to the shore; by day they are like finger-posts, pointing out the right road to the puzzled mariner. Is not the memory of the man who first caused the floating light to be moored in useful adjacency to the deadly shoal worth honouring? Is Henry Taylor less a benefactor to his species than Greathead? Let North Shields see to it. The whole district should subscribe to a memorial, and not the poorest Jack, I believe, on the North-east coast but would be ready with the value of even half an ounce of tobacco as a contribution.

Grace Darling is another dominant name hereabouts. The scene of her famous exploit—the Farne Islands—is at some distance from the Tyne,

yet not so much out of hail but that the story may be incorporated with Tyneside localisms. A diver once told me that, being at the Farne Islands, he was induced by curiosity to sink in his dress to the bottom, to have a look at the wreck of the *Forfarshire*, as she lay, and as she had been lying for years, in the glass-clear water.

"She went down to leeward of the island, sir," said he to me.

"And what of that?" said I, perceiving his drift nevertheless.

"Why," he answered, "as she was to leeward, the job of reaching her must have been trifling; consequently too much has been made of the yarn."

I looked the man over, as the Americans say, and wondered how *he* would have acted had he been in Grace Darling's place. There never can be any virtue in the discovery of a diver to diminish the glory of this maid's achievement. Grace Darling's deed is one of those few heroical acts about which too much has not been said because too much can never be said. The coble in which she rescued the unhappy people is yet, I believe, to be seen; and one needs to view it to fully appreciate Grace's story. Observe the dimensions of the little ark, and then realize the sea that was running that night, the foam of broken waters, the recoiling hurl of the boiling billows furiously charging the iron rocks of the islands! Surely England has never produced a daughter in whose memory she has reason to feel greater pride.

Sunderland Harbour. From a drawing by G. Chambers.

All this part of the coast has long enjoyed renown for its breed of sailors. I fancy that the Tyne hit the hardest blow of all England's deliveries in that way in our naval war. The coasting trade was the famous nursery of the British mariner, and there was always an eager seeking after the "coalman" by the press-gang. No race of Johnnies, as they were called, were ever their equal for alertness, for forecastle seamanship, and for fighting. It is said that the majority of Collingwood's crew at Trafalgar were Tynesiders. No naval seaman better appreciated the marine products of the Shields, and it is more than probable that he was always on the look-out for all gentlemen of the jacket who knew the meaning of the word "hinney," and who pronounced Newcastle, "Newcassel."

Sunderland is not very far south of Newcastle, and until one comes to the mouth of the River Wear there is not much coastal scenery to talk about. The impression I preserve of Sunderland is that of narrowness. Its river is wide and good, but one might suppose that land was enormously costly when they first began to build here, and that the issue of the general architectural plan was a hard squeeze. I recollect the principal street on a Saturday night. You would have thought that all Durham had turned out to take an airing in this narrow thoroughfare. The elbows were much more needed than the legs. Locomotion was extravagantly slow. The dreadful disaster that happened some

years ago, when scores of poor little children were crushed to death, seemed to be largely owing to Sunderland's singular taste for tight fits. I do not know whether the railway station has been enlarged since I was at Sunderland, but I have a clear recollection of the narrowness of its platforms, of the narrowness of its exits and entrances, of the narrowness of its lobby and of its waiting-rooms. The original motive for all this slenderness of dimensions might probably be in a desire to stimulate progress by inducing a haunting sense of stress; just as at Bath, they made the pavements extraordinarily wide that society there, which lounges and never works, might have plenty of room for cutting one another in the public streets.

But though Sunderland's commercial prosperity may not be of the Tyneside character, there is everywhere a wonderful suggestion of growth, of trade, of activity in a hundred directions. One must go to the river to compass the character of the industries. The docks are spacious and crowded with shipping; here are works for testing anchors and chain cables, and I was told, when I inspected them, that they were the finest in the kingdom. Here are huge granaries, engineering works, boiler works, saw-mills, creosote works, shipbuilding yards in plenty, lines of staiths for ever feeding the voracious maws of steamers or sinking colliers to their wash-streaks. But the noise! The distracting commingling of volcanic sounds! Locomotives shrieking, strings of loaded waggons thundering

past, a countless beating of iron plates, an endless harsh clanging of machines and hammers! Is there any part of Sunderland to which the uproar of the river does not penetrate? That people should go on living and hearing—existing and yet preserving their auricular organs—is a triumphant illustration of the power of habit to dominate all physical conditions.

One hauls out from the land after the ship's nose is clear of the South Outlet, and but very little of the coast is held in sight. What you notice you will find of the familiar type hereabouts—a character of iron ruggedness—a dark, low, forbidding terrace of cliff, with a menace of its own in the scowl of it in places, as though it were very well acquainted with the quality and temper of the ocean foe, the wild North Sea, that washes the length of it. It is this part of the coast that suggests to memory the fine old lines:—

> "When the fierce North wind with his airy forces
> Rears up the *North Sea* to a foaming fury,
> And the red lightning, with a storm of hail, comes
> Rushing amain down,
> How the poor sailors stand amaz'd and tremble,
> Whilst the hoarse thunder, like a bloody trumpet,
> Roars a loud onset to the gaping waters,
> Quick to devour them!"

Seaham Harbour is hard by; but what is one to say of it? It is safe, perhaps, to speak of it as "quaint." Lord Byron's association with Seaham renders it memorable. They show you his "Walk," as they call it, in the grounds of the seat of the Milbankes—Lord Londonderry's house, where the

poet was wont to aim at a mark with pistols; and they also show you the book signed by him after his marriage, with "Isabella Milbanke" written in clean, neat characters under "Byron." But Seaham is a terribly dull place, and what annals it has are not very much enlivened by the record of the hideous colliery accident that occurred close to it—how many years ago I cannot tell.

Nor, supposing us to sail away from Seaham with spirits depressed by the melancholy of the little town, shall we find very much to cheer us at the next place we look into—and that must be Hartlepool, or "the Hartleypools," as it is locally pronounced. Nevertheless, I preserve the memory of a pretty bit of colour. The day was of a steel-grey hue, and of an ice-coldness, insomuch that the atmosphere pressed upon the face as though the cheek were laid against an iron plate. A gale of wind had been blowing, but it was now a dead calm, and the sea came swinging along in oil-smooth grey folds which rushed soundlessly to the beach, where they arched in giant combers and thundered into foam with a note of hurricane in the roar of their fall. I took notice of a stretch of cliff rounding to the westward from the Heugh lights. The picture was one of wintry beauty, dim, grey, of proportions somewhat swollen. There were the yellow sands, the breakwater, the old pier, the harbour extending from the jetty on the Middleton side to the shipyard; and down upon the beach, lying on her beam ends, was the wreck of a schooner. What magic

was there in these plain details to impress one? Yet I can recall that picture when memory goes to work in vain to submit brighter and nobler scenes.

The Hartlepools are notorious for the "well-deck" steamer. I do not say that this type of ship is wholly peculiar to the port, but she is very much built there, and very much believed in there, and I have been led into more than one squabble by denouncing her in the public press as perhaps the most dangerous example of the shipwright's theory of ocean-going fabrics to be anywhere met with. The pages of an illustrated volume are no proper place for the discussion of such a subject as this, yet I think it would not be in seafaring human nature to pronounce the name of Hartlepool without muttering a forecastle blessing upon the steamers which she builds, engines, overloads, mans, and dispatches.

After Newcastle and Sunderland the several industries which flourish at the Hartlepools do not greatly astonish. Yet in writing of this port some years ago I said that, taking into consideration the dock accommodation, the situation of the towns, and the powerful railway interest that backs them, it would be impossible not to agree with those who regard the Hartlepools as the north-eastern port of the future. Let us hope they may become so. Unhappily there is always a rival, and Middlesborough is just round the corner, with a river scarcely less wonderful in its history than the Tyne.

You must put into the mouth of the Tees to witness the scenery here, for the land hollows into a very yawn to the river itself, and the deck of a ship standing north or south is not very likely to give you a view of this coast. Middlesborough grew in silence, and in silence has taken her place as a port that is rapidly increasing in greatness and importance. There is nothing so modest as the history of Middlesborough. A vast work was being done, yet nobody outside the district knew of it. Never shall I forget my astonishment when I visited the Tees for the first time, and, in company with the late Mr. John Fowler, the engineer, made the voyage from Middlesborough to the river's mouth. I had always imagined the Tees an insignificant, fordable stream, and I found it a wide, rolling river, the creation, comparatively speaking, of a few years of obscure but giant labour. On both sides rose mountains of clay, the refuse of the smelted ironstone. It formed embankments, it ran in lines of cliff, wild and picturesque, with ravines and gorges; all about were acres upon acres of land reclaimed from the sea, and built on, and cultivated; again and again, as we passed along, my eye was taken by some great spread of buildings—steel-works, rolling-mills, lofty structures of brick and iron, eighty feet high, called blast-furnaces, full of fire, with gas in wide sheets hissing from their summits.

And, indeed, one cannot get a better view of Middlesborough than from the top of one of these same fire-loaded structures, from whose base the

liquid metal runs in the colour of blood into the shapes of sand or soil, where it cools, and solidifies into "pigs." I took my first bird's-eye view of Middlesborough from the head of a blast-furnace belonging to Messrs. Bell Brothers at Port Clarence. Below me the river ran, coiling seawards; on the banks of it were shipyards stocked with fabrics illustrating every degree of construction. Where Bolckow's works stand the sky looked thunderous with smoke, and its tempestuous aspect was not a little heightened by the scarlet flashes of the furiously blown furnaces. The town seemed on fire. In all directions flames broke from towering apertures, and the forest aspect of the lofty chimneys was thickened and darkened by the complexities of the masts, and yards, and rigging of ships in the dock.

The romantic story goes that the late Mr. John Vaughan, one of the founders of the famous firm of Bolckow, stumbled into his immense fortune whilst rabbit-shooting on the Cleveland Hills, by kicking some piece of stuff, which he picked up, examined, and found to be ironstone. The tale is not quite true. The Cleveland Hills were coaxed into delivering their secret not by a trifling accident befalling a middle-aged gentleman on a rabbit-shooting expedition, but by a deliberate process of boring. When the quality and extent of the ironstone was determined, Mr. Vaughan went hastily to work to obtain leases for the working of large royalties at Eston. It was said that he took care, during his

negotiations, to leave the owners of the land in ignorance of his discovery, so that their royalty payment did not exceed fourpence per ton, though it afterwards rose to sixpence and ninepence. Probably the owners of the land were amongst the first to applaud in Mr. John Vaughan the business-like spirit of reticence he exhibited in approaching them. At all events his memory is entitled to this honour, that if he were not instrumental in creating Middlesborough, its rapid growth is very largely owing to his discovery and to his energetic application of it.

Mr. Fowler told me that less than thirty years ago—as time now stands—the depth of water at Middlesborough at low water on ordinary spring tides was three feet, and a trifle over sixteen feet at high water, and I remember that he added: "The course over the bar is fixed, and the depth, which twenty years ago was three feet, is now thirty feet at ordinary spring tides." In districts of this sort we find the face of nature to a large extent manufactured. Little is submitted that is proper for poetic interpretation. How can the muse sing of breakwaters of slag, of rubble mounds, and transverse jetties, of bleak stretches of reclaimed soil, of hoppers, and steam-tugs, and dredges? But if poetry can do little or nothing with such matters, commerce, and especially the commerce of a port, can do little or nothing without them. Viewed by daylight, I fear this part of the kingdom submits little more than a surface of highly valuable, but

exceedingly prosaic details; but the hand of Night waves the wand of the magician over the scene, and the picture is startling and magnificent as a vision of fire. The sky is scarlet, there is a perpetual play as of crimson lightning-flashes; in fact, the earliest impression one gets on visiting these flaming parts is that innumerable houses in the towns are being rapidly consumed, that the efforts of the firemen are paralyzed, and that the streets must be filled with crowds who stand contemplating with silent horror the destruction of all they own in the world.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NORTH SEA (*continued*).

Whitby—Joshua Coxon, poet—Walter Besant on Whitby—The whaler's yarn—In the North Sea in a smack—A gale of wind—An old Danish frigate—Scarborough—Steamboat excursions—The Thames.

REDCAR, Saltburn, and then Whitby. Roaring, fire-consuming, blast-furnacing Middlesborough might be on the other side of England—on the other side of the world, indeed—so astonishing is the difference. On Whitby seems to rest the ancestral hush of the coast. It is one of those dim old 'longshore places which seem to demand a special Act of Parliament for their preservation. Mastiffs should be employed to keep the jerry-builder at bay, and other secret deadly engines placed in all parts which the improver considers "eligible." Whitby does not in the least degree resemble Sandwich, yet one thinks of Sandwich when one explores the old parts of Whitby. But then the maritime traditions of Whitby are out and away more interesting, more briny, more charged with the spirit of old ocean than those of Sandwich, or indeed of any other port, whether stranded or not, that I can call to mind.

Boats in the Surf. From a sketch by Henry Moore, R.A.

For when you are at Whitby you think of the old Baltic trade, the motherly old whaler, all beam and boats and davits; and of fishing in many directions, all of an antique sort. Whitby was the birthplace of a poet but little known to fame; his name was Joshua Coxon, and to him, and to nobody else, posterity owes these verses:—

"Navigation is that noble art
That guides a ship when far from land,
And to any distant part
When practised by a skilful hand.

"To guide a ship along the shore
You must have compass, line, and lead,
Likewise a good look-out afore
If any danger be ahead.

"When to a harbour you do go,
Or place of safety for to ride,
You must calculate also
What time will serve you for the tide."

There are two more verses, but as a sample of the poetic genius of seafaring Whitby, the above will be considered sufficient as well as conclusive.

In his interesting narrative of the life and death of Captain Cook, Mr. Walter Besant has given us a very pretty sketch of old Whitby:—

"Under the east cliff there is nestled the oldest part of Whitby town. Here is the old Town Hall, built upon a great central pillar, thicker than those of Durham Cathedral, with a pillar of more slender diameter for each of the corners. Here are two narrow streets running parallel with the cliff, and half-a-dozen courts running up the lower slope before the cliff begins. Under the town hall is the market; as you see it to-

day so James Cook saw it that day when he walked in from Staithes: pigs and sheep, poultry, fruit and vegetables are sold in this market. For fish you can go to the quay on the other side. Many of the houses in this part of the town have got the date of their erection over the doors; one is dated 1704, another 1688, and so on; by far the greater part of them are more than a hundred years old. In the lower of the two streets, courts,

Yarmouth. By J. M. W. Turner.

nearly as narrow as the Yarmouth passages, run down to the water's edge, or to houses built overhanging the water."

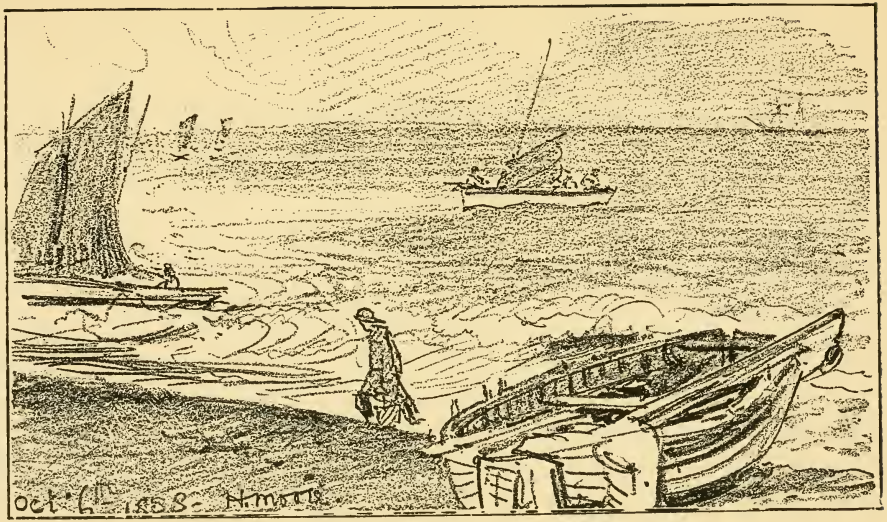
There is never any lack of public-houses where 'longshore Jack is, and Whitby is by no means illiberally stocked in this way. Mr. Besant mentions the "Raffled Anchor," and says, "When the sailor is not afloat he loves to sit where he can gaze upon

a harbour, and ships, and the blue water outside." True for you, Mr. Besant. The sailor is a web-footed creature; he must be able to dabble, or he will mope, and sicken, and perish. Here at Whitby are public-houses which the imagination easily repeoples with marine types and forms long since vanished: mariners in red waistcoats, incredible as such scarecrows must seem to us in this age; mariners with long tails tied down their backs; stiff and thick in fearnought, in wool stockings, in frieze jackets; their noses are of a jolly red with rum and storm, and their merry, groggy little eyes, deep sunk as though from the pressure of the heavy gales of wind into which they have been staring, on and off, ever since they first went to sea, and long before they were strong enough to ship a handspike.

It amuses the fancy to figure an assemblage of such Jacks as these. The whaler's yarn would be excellently in keeping with the weather-worn old room in which the sailors sit, and with the sulky voice of the sea tumbling upon the beach. "There she blows!" I seem to hear him say, '"There she blows!" I sung out from the foretopmast head. "Where away?" they bawls from the deck. "On the weather quarter," says I. "There she blows!" Up comes the cap'n. "Down helhum!" he says, says he. "Luff the ship to the wind. Round in on them lee braces, and aft with your mainsheet, Mr. Deadeye," he says to the mate. "Get them jib-sheets flattened in, and make her all snug for going about. Shake a reef out of the foretopsail, and loose the fore-topgarns'l. This 'ere bucket's got to laugh to-

day!" ' And thus the yarn proceeds, as one dreams, thinking of the "Raffled Anchor" and old Whitby.

All away down this coast, past the Humber and on to Yarmouth, the fishing smack is probably the most abundant of all craft. I have never sailed in a trawler hailing from the north and eastern seaboard, but I have spent a night in the North Sea in a Ramsgate smack, and may venture, therefore, to claim a small acquaintance with the work that is done, the hardships suffered, the perils encountered by the stalwart and gallant bands of men who are year after year breasting the surge of the German Ocean that our tables may be supplied and our appetites coaxed. There is no prettier sight than a fleet of smacks leading out for the fishing ground, and few pictures, I believe, could dwell more fixedly on the memory than these same smacks outweathering a heavy gale of wind, with their trawls aboard, and lying-to under a fragment of canvas. There is an old saying, "A fisherman's walk—three steps and overboard." If I had felt the truth of this before it came on to blow, my realization of its significance grew poignant afterwards. There were thirty or forty smacks in sight, some of them Ramsgate boats, but from what ports the others hailed I could not tell. It had blown a pleasant breeze of wind all day, but the sky had thickened in the north some hour or two before sundown, and then the breeze freshened in a squall, with a sudden edge of true wintry spite and frost in it. Our nets were dragged in, and all made snug, and by no means too soon,



On the East Coast. From a sketch by Henry Moore, R.A.

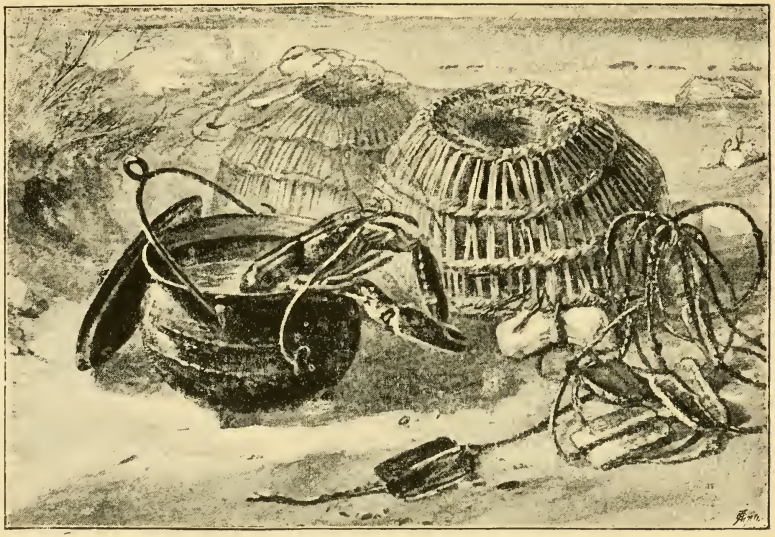
for, even whilst this was doing, the sky blackened with an ugly smear of rusty red, like an old blood-stain, low down over the hard green tumble of sea in the west. By seven o'clock it was blowing half a gale of wind, the evening black as thunder, a high sea running, with such breaks of froth bursting and blowing from the heads of the dark liquid heaps that a wild stormy light as of phosphorus, but not to be expressed in words nor to be dealt with by the brush, came and went in the sweeping ice-cold wind dyeing the heavens as black again for it. Truly might I say with Tom Hood that I had often met a gale before, but never such a blow. The smack was of some thirty tons burden, with a fine spring forward, and she took the seas with the buoyancy of an egg-shell; but it was just this "taking" that rendered the tempestuous reel, the midnight North Sea hornpipe insufferable to me, who was used to nothing under a thousand tons, and who had never gone a trawling before. The master of the smack invited me below to take some rest in one of the dark and airless pigeon-holes in which the worthy fellows turned in, "all standing." But if the motion was desperate on deck, it was unendurable in the small well which formed the smacksmen's sea-parlour, and I chose to sit in the companion-way, where at all events I was sheltered, and where I was able to keep a dull and sickly look-out for anything that might happen.

Never did I feel less a sailor than on that night. My thoughts were beaten down by the howling wind

and the rocket-like careering of the little fabric into some sort of stupid emotion of wonder that men could be found willing to pursue this sort of life after a single experience of hard weather. Is there anything severer in the way of seafaring? When I think of a winter's night and a smack in the heart of the North Sea in half a hurricane of wind, I am satisfied to believe that the vocation of the jacket provides no walk comparable with the smacksman's in risks, perils, and general misery. With excellent irony doth some marine bard of the pigtail period pipe up as follows :—

> "Then push round the can : oh ! you have not a notion
> Of sailors, their grog, and the sweethearts and wives ;
> Ah ! give me, my soul, the tight lads of the ocean,
> Who, though they're so wretched, lead such happy lives."

In the middle of the night, whilst it was yet blowing a storm of wind, the clouds broke, and the moon looked down—a dull, wet eye of silver; the sheets of froth flashed out to the touch of her beam, and as I directed my sight at the wild sea rolling in hills under her, a ship shaped herself out of the pale gloom and passed us. She was a huge lump of a wooden vessel, some remnant of the old Danish or Swedish navy, a frigate, with a row of ports, and she was looking up to the weather under three bands of close-reefed topsails and a reefed forecourse ; heeling away from us, and towering over us, too, as she plunged foaming by with snowstorms of foam bursting from her sides, and the noise of the gale in her rigging as loud in the ear of the night as the rattle of



Lobster Pots. From a drawing by E. W. Cooke, R.A.

heavy artillery swept along a street. Then the moon was eclipsed, the blackness fell again as a curtain, but the swiftness of her revelation and her evanishment made one think of the vision of that old-world ship of war as of something storm-born. Whenever I hear of Vanderdecken, my mind goes to the full-rigged apparition I viewed from the little companion-way of a smack during a certain cold and howling midnight that I spent in the North Sea.

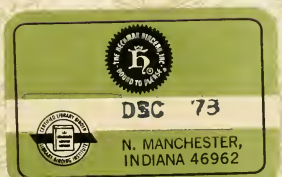
But the space at my disposal obliges me to see all ready for bringing up; otherwise it would be pleasant to heave-to abreast of Scarborough, whilst we gaze at the prettiest, if not the most picturesque, town on the east coast, and deplore its distance from London. Scarborough would be the most popular seaside haunt in England were it within a comfortable riding distance of the metropolis. How noble is the coast scenery here! How grand is Flamborough Head! But a proper course from this point must put that huge round of shore, which, starting from Thornham, does not cease its curve till Lowestoft is reached, well on the starboard bow. Until the cliffs of Norfolk and Suffolk heave into view all must be German Ocean.

There are many who could not conceive of a higher degree of felicity than a coasting cruise in a steamer. Opportunities for these excursions perhaps are not very numerous. A pity: for there is no lack of idle steamboats; the scenery lover is plentiful, and our methods of spending our few holidays are not so numerous as to prohibit the admission of an original

idea now and again. A sailing vessel might not provide a satisfactory ark for a tour of this sort; the calm, the tide, the inshore and offshore wind—these, and the like of these, are inevitable conditions for the interruption of happiness. But steam is at the will of pleasure; it will pause, it will move, it will approach and withdraw, it will act without consciousness of tidal influence, it cares not in what quarter the wind sits, and therefore a steamboat is the proper vehicle for a coastal voyage of inspection, in which you may halt before beauties to survey them, penetrate bays and harbours, explore rivers, and so return home with a satisfied spirit and a mind enlarged. From the Tyne to the Thames, or from the Thames to the Tyne, and back again! This should prove a tempting advertisement, always providing that the caterer supplies one with the right kind of little ship. These amblings, moreover, are invaluable as aids to local patriotism. They may not render a man more loyal to the country at large, but they invariably deepen his attachment to his own district. With what joy does the Cockney receive the embrace of his River Thames as he penetrates the noble stream after trips up the Humber, and the Tees, and the Tyne! The creosote works, the acres of inky chimneys, the building-yards, the dominions of the steam-fiend, where he forges the propeller that drives and the anchor that holds; how light will be the magic of the memory these things may create in the mind of the Cockney who, yet fresh from them, but now steaming up the Thames,

surveys the shores of Gravesend and of Tilbury, the engaging scenery of the Isle of Dogs, and the wonders of the waterside regions of the great city looming in massive proportions amidst a brown fog more sombre than anything that can be produced by the smokestacks of steel and chemical works!

THE END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